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Ancient Classics for English Readers

EDITED BY THE

REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

(SUPPLEMENTARY SERIES.)

LUCRETIUS

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LUCRETIUS

BY

W. H. MALLOCK.

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NOTE.

THE prose translations from Lucretius are taken in the main, with but very slight alterations, from the version of Mr Munro. The verse translations are my own.

W. H. M.

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LUCRETIUS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

As we look back upon the works of the great writers of the past—works and writers with which, in a certain sense, we are quite familiar, and which in a certain sense are as famous now as ever—it will sometimes give us a strange, and almost painful shock, if we realise how very few of these can be still said to live. They have their immortality, it is true; but they have passed to it through the grave and gate of death. Their forms are still heroic; but they are heroes without blood, and shadowy; and we seem to meet them in a dim Elysium, not in the world around us. Or else we may compare them to bodies embalmed with spices, hidden away underground, and to be studied only at intervals, in the crypts of literature. A few, a few only, such as Horace and Shakespeare, still keep their fleshly life in them, are able to push their way towards us through the distractions and cares surrounding us, to parley

with these, and to show us how to meet them, and, standing close beside us, assail us with living voices.

Amongst this small minority Lucretius certainly can claim no place. When his own language was still living, when men in the extent of their knowledge and their ways of thought were still the same as he himself knew them, not even then does he seem to have been popular or influential. And men, since he knew them, have grown and changed. Knowledge has widened in ways he never dreamed of; new tones have grown into human sentiment; all the lights and shadows of life have shifted; and its whole surface has been dyed with different colours. Naturally, we then—we of the modern world—as far as any direct influence goes, are quite beyond his reach. His voice is not as our voice; it is of a different substance. We can make no direct response to it. At his note our minds and feelings rouse to no movement. It comes to us like a "horn of elf-land faintly blowing," and we know that it was meant for other ears than ours.

But the case of Lucretius is in some ways a singular one; and this very remoteness may give him, in these days, a sharp and vivid interest for us, that has long gone from poetry to which in many ways we are far nearer. How this is, we shall see readily when we consider the work he did. We shall see why he had as little interest as he had for his own epoch, and why he has as much as he has for ours. Of his life next to nothing is known for certain, beyond the fact that he was a Roman of probably noble family, that he died in the prime of his manhood, about half a century

before the birth of Christ, and that a legend ascribes his death to the effects of a maddening love-philtre. What his fame rests on, what makes his name known to us, is a single poem—or, speaking of it as a whole, it may be perhaps more just to say, a single treatise in verse. For the main subject of this poem is not poetical; nor, in composing it, was poetry the author's first object. Primarily, and before all things, the work is a scientific treatise—as strictly scientific (at least in the author's intention) as a modern treatise on optics, or geology, or the origin of species; and, except as far as metre goes, it has in many places as little of poetry as these have. Poetry, it is true, there is in it—poetry in abundance; and some of this is the loftiest in all Roman literature. Continually, too, when we do not get poetry, we are still conscious that we are listening to a poet. All this we shall come to see by-and-by. But it will be well first to consider the work only in its primary character, that of a book of science; for here is the foundation of its special interest for ourselves; and our interest in it, under its other aspects, is largely based on this.

Lucretius called his book 'An Essay on the Nature of Things.' And he designed it to be a complete scientific explanation of the universe, and the relation of man to it, as a part of itself. He applies the same method to the investigation of mind and matter; of human and animal life; of organic and inorganic nature; and he describes the way in which the latter has risen out of the former. He traces the evolution of the present universe out of its original elements;

he tells us how the earth became fit gradually to sustain life on its surface; he explains the origin of the existing species of animals, man included, together with the nature of consciousness, and the grounds of knowledge. And, finally, he gives us a history of human progress and civilisation, from the rudest to the most advanced stages, explaining the origin of language, of the state, of law, and the development of the various arts. And he does not do this as a poet might have been expected to do it. This is the thing of all others that he most seeks to avoid. He wishes to deal in no broad effective generalities, no picturesque metaphor. He seeks to drown no homely details by devices of artistic chiaroscuro. He bids all poetic imagination, as a tempter, get behind him. One by one, with all the method he can master, he goes into the questions that are before him, confusing the matter with no ornamental metaphors. He is a strict utilitarian in his choice of language. He cares not how prosaic he is. His great aim is to explain facts, and to show convincingly that his explanations are the true ones.

Judged of as an exposition of what really is, the science of Lucretius is of course completely valueless. And yet there are two things about it which, for the present generation, must give it a peculiar interest. One of these things is that very valuelessness, that strange, grotesque difference to all our modern teaching. But such a difference by itself would not create an interest. There is a second point about it, just as noticeable as the first, and which, indeed, alone makes

the first worth noticing—and this is the strange likeness to our modern teaching that runs through all this difference. Couched under other forms, arrived at by other courses, the first principles of Lucretius, and many of his last conclusions, are the same, or are all but the same, as those which are now startling the world as new revelations—revelations so new and so startling that we can as yet only half accept them. In the first place, his mission and his attitude, to view the matter broadly, are entirely analogous to those of our modern physicists. He comes forward just as they do, as the champion of natural science, claiming that by it, and by it alone, we are to understand man's life, and to explain the universe. It is his doctrine, just as it is theirs, that no event can occur either in the outer world about us, or in the inner world of our own consciousness, that is not connected with some material change, and is not conceivably explicable in terms of matter. And he makes this claim for science, just as it is made now, against all theology, and against all religion. To these he ascribes, just as is done by some modern thinkers, a large part of the ills men suffer from. To a certain extent, too, he professes the belief, so often now held out to us, that when once religion, with its blighting influence, is exterminated, there are prospects of "a better, and, above all, a happier state of existence," for the human race. Indeed, so like is much of his general language to what we hear continually in our own day, so inspired does it seem to be with just the same animus, that we might at times almost fancy he was Professor Tyndall, or one of the

two Mills, confuting the arguments of Paley or of Butler, or deriding the narratives of the book of Genesis.

But it is not in his general attitude only that he is so like the moderns. With less exactness, but in perhaps a far more singular manner, he seems to anticipate many of their most special individual doctrines. The evolution of the present universe, the indestructibility of matter, the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, the origin of language, of religion, of the state, of law, and the progress of society generally—on these, as well as on numerous other points, the teachings of Lucretius are in strange accordance with much of what we are being taught now. To us these things are being told as entirely fresh tidings,—as facts and theories that have now for the first time dawned on the human spirit. And to a certain extent there is a truth in this; but to a certain extent only. The same thoughts and the same theories were the property of Lucretius or of his teacher; and they have now come back to the world, not as different things, but as the same things changed.

Here is that double fact about Lucretius which gives him his special interest for us—the likeness of his thoughts to much of the thought now, and also the difference. When we study him, we are brought face to face with two combatants—science and theology. When we look about us now, we are brought face to face with two combatants also—science and theology. At first these two pairs seem so unlike each other, that we hardly class them together, or

make any comparison between them, or their modes of warfare. If we look at them a little longer, we shall see that they are the same; and then for the first time shall we fully realise their unlikeness, just as we first see fully what the years have done for a man's face, when we connect it with what it once was when a boy's. In the days of Lucretius, materialism and theism were each, as it were, in their boyhood; and, armed with simple weapons, they fought a boyish battle. If we look back a little on what they then were, it may help us better to realise what they now are,—how each has been changed by the knowledge of new perplexities—how each, armed now with weapons so far more formidable, and so far more skilful in the use of them, seems less confident of a final victory—how the faces of each have lost their old rash confidence, and are marked by deeper lines of thought and of anxiety.

In making this comparison, the form of Lucretius's work will itself be of some assistance to us. Were a similar work to be written in our time in a similar form, it might create much surprise, but could not command much attention; and even that of Lucretius, when first given to the world, seems, as has been already said, never to have been really popular. We may perhaps gain some notion of the general literary effect of it, if we conceive Mr Tennyson, instead of writing his "Arthurian Idylls," to have devoted his talents to versifying Mr Darwin's 'Origin of Species' and 'Descent of Man;' using the views of that philosopher as a text for a passionate invective against

Anglican orthodoxy and the doctrine of original sin, and a passionate protest that when we were once free of these superstitions, the complexion of our whole life would change, and human society become a nobler thing. In such a composition there could not fail to be passages of powerful and lofty poetry; and touches of a poet's hand we should be sure to trace everywhere. But however clearly it might be the work of a poet, it would very certainly not be a successful poem. Our admiration for the author's power might be great; but our regret for his waste of it would be greater. But as regards Lucretius, our feelings are somewhat different. The scientific system he undertook to expound was to comprise the whole circle of the sciences, and was to unravel the whole riddle of existence with a rapidity and completeness that no one now so much as dreams of. From a poet's standpoint, therefore, his subject, judged as a whole, possessed a sort of epic grandeur, that to him seemed compatible with the strictest scientific accuracy. At the same time, in its details, and in the sort of reasonings they were founded on and supported by, there was a simplicity that made them less unfit than we should imagine to be expressed in verse. In fact, the form in which Lucretius gave the world his system is itself singularly typical of how far ancient science is removed from ours, and is the liveliest illustration possible of the sort of gulf that is between them.

But the form that Lucretius gave his work is valuable and instructive for another reason than this. The poem has a secondary character, with which its form

is in more natural keeping, and of which it is a yet more special expression. Primarily, as has been said, Lucretius wrote as a man of science. To indoctrinate men with science, with accurate science, was his main object. But it was not with science for its own sake. It was for the sake of the effect it was to have upon their lives, upon their hopes, their joys, their practical conduct, their happiness. What this effect was to be, he seems to think in a large measure self-evident. At any rate it did not need the same elaborate exposition as the reasoning which led up to it. But still at the same time he is perpetually referring to it, perpetually calling the attention of his readers to it; showing them that it—it alone—is, though not the main subject of his work, at any rate the main object of it. What is man? why is he here? what hope has he in this world? what are the sources of his joys and sorrows? how shall he choose the first of these, and avoid the latter? what things are here worth living for? and, what worth is there in even the best of these? These are the ultimate questions that really concern men; and science has no general value, save as preparing our minds to meet them. And, as Lucretius views it, science gives us this preparation in one single way. Its work is to isolate life; to show us that life is self-centred, self-bounded, and, in so far as it is sufficient at all, self-sufficient. Till life is thus isolated, it is the earnest, the fierce belief of Lucretius, that we shall never have it at its best; it will be full of miseries and solicitudes which need not exist, but which we through our folly and headstrong ignorance

create ourselves, for our own torment. What manner of possession he regarded life when thus isolated, what happiness or pleasure he thought it would be able to yield us, is a question of equal interest for us as the character of his physical science, and suggests an equally significant comparison with the thought of our own time. Much of his views upon this point his poetical treatment of his subject will enable us to gather, though he has not reduced these opinions to a formal system; and the fact that he was a poet, and looked at life with a great poet's vision, will give to these opinions a special value and meaning.

In examining his work, then, though it is a work that no longer speaks directly to us, or can directly influence any of our ways of thinking, or impart to us any new fragment of knowledge, we shall be examining something that has more interest for us than belongs to a mere curious antiquity. We shall be examining a distant landmark, to which the atmosphere of our own day is giving a new distinctness, and which shows us how far in twenty centuries men's minds have travelled—travelled along two courses. One course is their explanation of life by natural or by supernatural theories; the other is their sentiments and their practical teaching with regard to life when explained.

Thus, in attempting to understand the work of Lucretius, our task will be simplified by dividing it into two parts. Let us first, therefore, without reference to the literary form he gave it, try to understand accurately his scientific system, his methods of obser-

vation and reasoning, and the conclusions, general and particular, that he arrived at. We shall thus see what the main message was that he wished to deliver to the world. Let us then go on to examine the poem itself, and see how, as a poet, he handled so refractory a subject; and how, in proclaiming and illustrating its relations to human life, and to human passion, he made it lead up to and suggest poetry. We shall so be brought to understand what his teaching was, and what he himself seemed to feel were the results of it. Then we may be led on to dwell briefly on the chief points of difference between him and us, —though in making such a comparison we must each of us do much for ourselves. And further, we may consider briefly—though this is the matter that will have least interest for us—the 'Essay on the Nature of Things,' not as science, not as philosophy, but simply as a literary production, as a poem, as a work of art in language, that is distinguished as such by certain technical defects and excellences.

What then we shall now begin with considering is the scientific system that Lucretius aims at expounding to us—what it was, and how he came to master it. To understand this, however, it will be necessary to go a little farther back in history, and try to realise as best we may the nature of the scientific systems that had gone before it, and that it at once grew out of and superseded.

CHAPTER II.

THE DAWN OF PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

"THE impregnable position of Science," says one of our latest and most celebrated scientific teachers, "may be stated in a few words. We claim and we shall wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory." The earliest claim and the earliest aim of science was identical with this, its latest. The same words are true of it, in its birth and in its maturity

The birth of science, using the word in the sense now popularly and specially attached to it, is not an event so vague as one might expect to find it. It is an event which, so far as we know, we can give with accuracy both a date and place to. In the Greek city of Miletus, about six hundred years before Christ, there flourished a certain thoughtful man named Thales. He it was who, so far as we know, was the first man of science. He caught the first distinct glimmer of a scientific conception of things, and revealed as best he could this new light to others. This event was a momentous one. The details of it are far remote: we have but few and scanty records of it. But let us do our best to realise what its nature was.

The race that Thales came of, and amongst whose ideas he was nurtured, was a race singularly keen, inquiring, intellectual, and imaginative. They felt, therefore, the wonder of the world, and the need for an explanation of it. But for a long time they were contented with a very simple answer. In one point, we must remember, they were very unlike ourselves. One of the ideas which weighs most heavily on the modern consciousness is the sense of our own separation from nature, often of our antagonism to it. But the Greeks, amongst whom natural science took its rise, were conscious of no such separation. They felt they were a part of nature, akin to it, in harmony with it. They were indeed themselves but one of nature's forces. Now, of many of nature's phenomena, they felt that they were themselves the causes and the controllers. But besides these, there were others which they could neither cause nor control. Here was their first problem: how should they explain these? The answer was obvious. These were the workings of beings like themselves, only indefinitely wiser and indefinitely more powerful. All the phenomena of nature they at once accounted for, so far as they realised that any account was required of them, by an anthropomorphic polytheism; or in other words, as Mr Matthew Arnold might express it, all that was done in the world, that was not done by ourselves, was done and conducted by a race of "magnified and non-natural men."

As, however, this system of theology became more definite, and more burdened with detail, it began to

jar at length upon finer and more reflecting minds. And such—Thales being the first of them—sought to find an escape from it in some simpler and more sedate conception. The first transition to this—the first beginning of the change from theology to science—is a very curious one. It took this form. Thales was discontented with the theory that represented all the changes and facts of the universe as due to the manipulation of a race of divine animals. It was a theory that was arbitrary, grotesque, and inharmonious. It needed to be simplified. Accordingly, discarding the divine animals altogether, he supposed the universe to be a divine animal itself, living, moving, breathing as men do, and as the gods were supposed to do. Thus one of the philosophers of the school of Thales taught that the stars were the world's breathing-holes. This conception seems strange and quaint to us now, but still it was a true step in the direction of science. And it did not end here. This theory was not allowed to remain as a mere abstract statement. Attempts were at once made to connect it with the observed facts of things. The material world, or in other words matter, being conceived of as itself alive, and as a single living thing, the variety of the shapes it took had to be conceived of as apparent only, not real—or, at any rate, all equally reducible to some common unity. Observation of facts supplied many cases that seemed to show that this was so. Vapours condensed themselves into water; ice melted into water; snow melted into water; and conversely water, or moisture, which seemed near akin to it, was absorbed

into plants and animals, and sustained their life Life, again, was seen to depend on respiration; and thus life and living beings seemed, from one point of view, to be a mode of air. Similarly, fire seemed to be possessed of a like protean power. Heat, fire's primary quality, was seen to be associated with life; nearly every substance could be burnt, and reduced to fire; and so all things, it was argued, had originally been composed out of it. Such were the natural observations of the first physicists,—one confining his attention to one set of phenomena, another to another, being guided in this choice by no assignable reason.

Thus one of them taught that everything was really water; another that everything was really air; another that everything was really fire; another that everything was really some unqualified substance, that had the power of giving itself a number of contrary qualities.

These various speculators form together the first scientific school; and in spite of their various differences, they agree in one fundamental point. They agree in substituting for an explanation of the universe that was complicated and unverifiable, one that was simple, and was at least in some degree capable of verification, and in some degree founded upon observation. They made the power of nature a single power, contained within herself, and immanent everywhere; they taught that this power was material and accessible to observation, and they tried to analyse it into its simplest form.

Science remained in this stage for about a hundred

years—that is, thinkers for about that time treated matter as though it were endowed with life, and tried to explain the universe by ascribing to it the powers and the character of an animal. But all the while this school of thought bore within itself the seeds of change; and gradually and insensibly its exponents were carried beyond it. The conception of the world acting as an animal, insensibly died into, or got confused with, that of its acting under law as an automaton.

Thus Anaximander, who was born not thirty years after Thales, though basing his speculations, like Thales, on the supposed vitality of matter, still shows a tendency to rise out of this conception, or at least to merge it in another. He it was who taught that the real substance of all things was a vague uniform substance, living, but without qualities; but capable, by virtue of its life, of taking different qualities to different parts of itself. Thus, he teaches, the elementary contraries, warm and cold, moist and dry, were first separated. Up to this point he seems to have thought of matter as acting like a living thing. After this he seems to change his view of it, and to treat its movements as those of a blind and dead necessity. From the conflict of these contraries, he teaches, there arose an eternal motion, out of which the present universe gradually shaped itself, including men, and gods also, these last being thus the product of natural action, not the producers of it. The earth, he further teaches, was once fluid, and has been evolved slowly into its present state. Life at length was de-

veloped on its surface through the interaction of heat and moisture, and at first existed only in the water, which at a former epoch covered everything. Gradually much of these waters dried up, and a number of living creatures were left on land. These organisms slowly adapted themselves to their environments, and the land animals acquired their present form.

In these doctrines we see certainly the germ at least of a more advanced conception of things. The first scientific conception has already given birth to a new and antagonistic one. A little later on this antagonism becomes yet more marked; and it grows quite plain that this early school of science is divided against itself.

We see this very clearly in the cases of Heracleitus* and Empedocles. Both of these still look for the first cause of things as they are, in a certain living will, in a certain personal character that inheres in matter. It is this that in the first place sets things in motion; but when once the motion has begun, they seek to explain the direction of it by essentially inanimate and impersonal causes. Thus Empedocles, as his principles of movement, postulates two *quasi* personal forces, Strife and Love. But having started with these, he at once ceases to be personal; and analysing all substances, not into water, air, or fire, or a vague and illimitable matter, but into a combination of all of these—into what, in fact, we still are accustomed

* Heracleitus has received much attention in Germany as a metaphysician, as well as a man of science. It is only in this last character that he is here alluded to.

to call the four elements—he tries to show how things of necessity evolved themselves out of manifold and long-continued combinations of these.

As a specimen of the way in which Empedocles worked out his theories, it may be mentioned that his account of the origin of species is to a great extent the same as that of Mr Darwin. All sorts of living creatures, he taught, first appeared on the earth, many of them unable to defend or to reproduce themselves, and thus perished in the inevitable struggle for existence. The fittest alone survived by this process of natural selection, and these are the races of men and animals that are now living. Here, then, is a picturesque illustration of the growing inconsistency with itself of the first school of science. We have Strife and Love to explain the beginning of motion, and a crude Darwinism to explain the results of it.

The inconsistency thus indicated was due to the growing distinctness of two separate ideas, which men still tried to identify, and only ended by confusing them. This confusion was first reduced to order by Anaxagoras, another thinker of the same period, who may be said to have been the precursor of the second school of science, by expressing the double idea that was implicit in the first. He no longer treats the world as an animal, or matter as living, and leavened with such affections as love and hate. The matter there was to be moved, and the force there was to move it, he first expressly teaches, are two distinct things. "Matter," he said, as an epitome of this teaching, "was originally without form and void—all its parts were

confused together: then Mind came, and wrought it into form and order." But not only was this general principle an advance on what had been before; he made a great step also in the working out of it, through his new analysis of matter. This, he taught, consists of an infinite number of minute elementary particles, of a vast variety of kinds,—such as would be produced could we turn all the wood in the world to sawdust, grind all the stone in the world to powder, file all the metals in the world into the same condition, and treat all the other substances we see about us in a like manner. And the present order of things was produced by the gradual cohering together of like particles, the elementary stone-dust becoming stone, wood-dust wood, iron-dust iron, and so on. This process, he taught, as has been said before, was not initiated by the particles themselves, or any principle immanent in them, but by an intelligent and designing Mind, independent of and external to them. But in his application of this theory, Anaxagoras uses his Mind only to account for the beginning of a mechanical movement of the particles, and he then leaves these to do all the rest for themselves. That mechanical movement began as a revolution of the particles at a single point. Then gradually ever-increasing masses were drawn into this vortex, which is still extending farther and farther into the infinite realm of matter; and out of this movement, without any succeeding intervention of Mind, the universe as we know it has evolved itself.

Anaxagoras flourished only a century after Thales. Let us see how far, in this short time, the mind had

wandered away from, and advanced beyond, its original crude theological explanation of things. First, as we have seen already, men regarded the universe as worked and ordered by a race of divine animals, who were themselves an essential part of it. Next they regarded the universe as a single divine animal in itself. Next, from reflecting more systematically on this animal's ways, they came insensibly to change their conception of it, and to ascribe to its movements, in a great measure, a certain blind and essentially impersonal necessity. Next they came to realise that they were really entertaining the idea of two principles, and consciously and explicitly they learnt to distinguish between and to separate them. The universe was once more not a living thing for them; its phenomena were now caused no longer by a set of beings of like passions with ourselves, and of like ways of acting, but by a single supreme intelligence, passionless and bodiless, which, though the original cause of all we see around us, did not cause or interfere with anything of this directly. All it was supposed to have done was to have given matter, in the first place, a shove, and after that, as Goethe says, "to sit apart, and watch the world go."

This stage formed a new point of departure. The conception now arrived at is this, of the universe on the one hand, as a machine in motion, and of an active intelligence on the other, to whom in some way the motion is attributable. But there is this important point to notice. Mind, according to this theory, did not itself form the universe into the machine it is, still

less is it at the present time turning the handle. All it did was to give matter an original impetus, by which matter was itself enabled to form itself into a machine, and a machine retaining within itself thenceforward its own principle of motion. Mind and matter being thus distinctly separated, and the connection between the two being made so vague, and to all appearance so temporary, the next step in scientific thought was to discard this Mind altogether, and to endow matter with the power of starting its own movement, as well as of continuing it. Thus Mind, Design, and Life, as principles of things, disappeared altogether, and came back in an entirely changed position. The case indeed was simply reversed. Henceforward, instead of the motion of matter being looked upon as the effect of a self-dependent life, life was looked upon as the product of the self-dependent motion of matter.

The conception of this general theory formed a new epoch in science. Nor was it only as a general theory that it was in advance of what had gone before. Its exponents at once began to work it out in a more exact way. They reduced these various doctrines to a complete system; and not only this, but they did their best to test them, and to raise them from the state of assumptions to that of verified facts.

The father of this new school was Democritus, who flourished a generation later than Anaxagoras, and about a century and a half after the death of Thales. A century later still, this system of science was propounded afresh, and given fresh currency to, by Epicurus, who also introduced into it some slight modifi-

cations. And it is this system that Lucretius learned from Epicurus, and that we are about to consider at length, as set forth by him.

Before going on to do this, there are one or two points to remember. All the scientific progress we have just been speaking of was confined to the Greek world, and not even amongst the Greeks were its teachings universally accepted. With the general public, theology and polytheism continued to hold its own, and the allegiance of the world of thought was divided between it and metaphysical systems, which, though equally opposed to the popular theology, can yet not be called science at all. Outside the Greek world, this advanced thought had for a long while little influence. Rome for centuries felt nothing of it, but lay buried in what to the eyes of a great philosopher would have seemed savage and debasing superstition. By the time of Lucretius, Greek culture was extending, and with it there was beginning a gradual dawn of scepticism over the Roman world. But the mass of men as he found them were still under the dominion of the old errors —still had their minds darkened by a faith more or less fervent in the old supernatural theory of things. The aim of Lucretius was to preach to them a new gospel, which should once and for all clear their mental vision, and give them a new and a healthier view of life. Such a gospel he conceived himself to have found in the scientific system of Epicurus, and in his practical deductions from it. It was this that he set himself to preach to the Roman people, for their liberation

and their new birth to liberty; and he was confident in the power of it, not because it was plausible, or because it was pleasing, but first, and before all things, because he held it to be in demonstrable accordance with fact; because it was based upon observation and experiment, not on fancy; and because from first to last its hypotheses were capable of verification. It is this scientific system we are now about to consider; and that it was conceived by Lucretius and his master to possess these characteristics that have just been mentioned, will become plain when we see how they criticised the systems which they designed theirs to replace.

In our examination of this system, it will be as well to treat it as though it were the real property of Lucretius; and this mainly for the sake of convenience. But we must at the same time remember that though he was, and professed to be, in the main, expounding the discoveries of another, he had to some extent really made them his own, by careful attempts at verifying all their details, and that he had probably also added to them, and perhaps modified them, himself.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCIENTIFIC SYSTEM OF LUCRETIUS.

SECTION I.

THE ANALYSIS OF MATTER.

THE problem Lucretius set himself to solve was a double one. First, What was the original nature of matter? secondly, By what process has it in the course of time arrived at its present state? And the solution he offered was the joint product of certain *à priori* assumptions and reflections, and a keen and extensive observation of natural facts.

His first great assumption, and his first great observation, were as follows: He assumed that all our knowledge was derived from sense,—that the senses were the only channels and the only tests of truth; he observed that the order of things revealed to him by his senses, and whose secrets he had set himself to explain, was something not capricious, but acting in a fixed way, and therefore really constant under all apparent change. "Without fixed seasons of rain,"

he says, "the earth is unable to put forth its gladdening produce; nor, again, if kept from food, could the nature of living things continue its kind and sustain life." "Or again," he asks, "why should not some men outlive many generations, if it were not that an unchanging matter had been assigned for begetting things, and what can arise out of this matter, is fixed?" He observes, further, another set of facts. "Rains die, but goodly crops spring up, and boughs are green with leaves upon the trees. Trees themselves are laden with fruit; by them in turn our race and the race of wild beasts are fed; by them we see glad towns teem with children, and the leafy forests ring on all sides with the song of new birds." And from this Lucretius arrives at another general conclusion. "Nature," he says, "dissolves everything back into its first bodies, and does not annihilate things."

Here, then, he has two broad generalisations to start with. Nature is uniform; and nothing in nature can come out of or return to nothing. The first of these conclusions he thinks can stand by itself. He seeks to verify the last one thus: If it be not so —if things can come from nothing—then anything might come out of anything. Men might spring out of the sea, fish out of the earth, birds out of the air. In a word, there could be no such uniformity in the world as there very certainly is. Again, for a like reason, it is plain that nothing can turn into nothing; for in that case objects might suddenly disappear, without any external force destroying them. But this, it is

very certain, they never do. And again, if things could ever turn into nothing, everything would by this time have vanished, "eaten up by the infinite time gone by." And "any amount of force must of course undo the texture of things in which no parts at all were of an everlasting body."

He has thus settled that the universe he has to account for is made up of a matter that, in obedience to fixed laws, is perpetually changing its appearance, and yet is never destroyed. To what is this matter reducible in its last analysis? Lucretius answers, to two things—empty space, and atoms. These atoms are particles of an inconceivable minuteness, and are alike in the absence of all attributes or qualities, except solidity, indestructibility, weight, and figure. They are far too small for sight to take any account of; but this need not make us doubtful of their material reality. We can neither see the wind, or smells, or sounds, or heat, or cold; and "yet," says Lucretius, "all these things must be material, because they touch the senses." Equally necessary, too, is the existence of empty space. For if it were not for this there could be no motion; everything would be a single solid mass. But as a matter of fact we may see that even things that seem solid are not solid really—stones, for instance, through which water often oozes. Further, bodies of equal bulk weigh differently,—from which it is plain that some have more void than others. But though empty space seems thus to enter into everything, there are some bodies that are absolutely solid; and such are the atoms themselves, the first beginnings

of things. For unless these were solid, there would be no matter at all. The universe would be empty space. Equally necessary, too, is it that the atoms should be indivisible; because, Lucretius aptly argues, if Nature had set no limits to the breaking of things, bodies of matter would have been by this time so pulverised that nothing could within a fixed time be conceived out of them, and "reach its utmost growth of being."

Lucretius contrasts this analysis of matter with those of the former speculators, of whom we have already spoken, and shows how inadequate these were to explain the facts of the case. Fire—he asks, how can it possibly be true to analyse all things into fire, and say that they were formed out of it? "How," he asks, "can things be so various if they are formed out of fire, one and unmixed? It would avail nothing for hot fire to be condensed and rarefied. The heat would only become more intense by the compression of parts, more faint by their dispersion." No diversity of things could arise in this way; in addition to which, fires can be condensed and rarefied only if there be void, the existence of which those who held that everything was fire necessarily denied. Indeed, says Lucretius, it needs but little exertion of thought to show us that, if we take void away, everything must become solid. Supposing, however, he goes on, that these philosophers think that fire generates various bodies in some other way, not by condensation and rarefaction. This, for other reasons, is equally impossible. For fire, if it ceases altogether to be fiery, ceases to exist.

Fire, according to the hypothesis now in question, is the essence of all matter—is matter in its simplest state. To say, then, that matter, in this its simplest state, is robbed of all its properties, is just the same as saying that it ceases to exist. And in the majority of things about us there are none of the properties of fire. If, therefore, fire was the primal element, it must have first been turned to nothing; and out of that nothing all these other things must have emerged. "Again," Lucretius goes on, "to say that all things are fire, and no real thing but fire exists, appears sheer dotage. For those who maintain this take their stand on the senses to fight against the senses, which appears to me to be as false as it is foolish. For what surer test can we have than the senses of truth and falsehood? It would be just as wise to deny the reality of fire, and affirm the reality of all other things."

For similar reasons they are wrong who take for a first principle water, or earth, or air; or air and fire; or earth and water together; or, as did Empedocles, fire water, earth, and air. These speculators were all alike wrong, because they denied the existence of void, and because they supposed matter to be infinitely divisible.

Again, if all things are produced from four things, and again broken up into four things, there is no more meaning in this statement than there would be in its converse—viz., that the various objects and substances about us were the first beginnings of these elements, not these elements the first beginnings of them. Whilst if, to escape this, it be supposed that

these four elements meet in such a way that none of them in the union changes its nature, nothing whatever will be able to be produced out of them.

The first beginnings of things must be of a kind quite different from these. They must be of themselves below the reach of sense; their nature must be unseen and latent, and thus capable of infinite conversion and change by means of various combinations. Anaxagoras made a step in the right direction; but then he too denied the existence of void, and he too taught matter was infinitely divisible. His system was therefore as radically faulty as the others. The sort of approach to atomism which he made is likewise evidently unsuccessful, and will not explain the facts of nature. For, according to Anaxagoras, our bodies are made up of an aggregate of flesh-particles, blood-particles, bone-particles, and so on. If this were the case, food could not nourish them, unless it contained in itself small bodies of blood, bone, and flesh. Then, too, if all bodies grow out of the earth, or are nourished by what does so, earth itself must be an aggregate of all these bodies. Wood, when ignited, yields smoke, flame, and ash. On the hypothesis of Anaxagoras, therefore, it must be composed of particles that are foreign to itself. Anaxagoras felt this difficulty, and tried to escape it by saying that all things to some extent are latent in all things, and that each thing is what it is in virtue of those particles of which it has the largest number. But this, says Lucretius, is plainly not the case; for if it were so, we should get blood out of stones, milk out of grass, and fire out of wood without

igniting it. People say that the rubbing of boughs in a forest produces fire; and this, Lucretius admits, is quite true. But that is not because fire, ready made, is latent in the wood, but because the arrangement of atoms is changed, and, like the rearrangement of the letters of a word, produces a new result.

Atoms and void, then—to these two things everything that is, is reducible. These are the substance of everything, the only things that really exist. Whatever can be named, is either a property or an accident of these two things. The properties of atoms are such things as their shape and weight, which they cannot lose unless they lose their own existence. All things else, such as "slavery, poverty, riches, war, concord," —these are but accidents, one and all, of atoms and of void. "Time, also," adds Lucretius, "exists not by itself; but simply from the things which happen, the sense apprehends what has been done in time past, as well as what is present, and what is to follow after."

Further, atoms and void are both infinite in quantity; because, in the first place, it is inconceivable that they should not be so; and, in the second place, unless they were so, it is plain for many reasons that they would not have produced the results they have done. The first of these arguments is simple enough. Let us make the bounds of things as vast as we will, there must still be something or other outside them. The second set of arguments will appear presently.

SECTION II.

THE FORMATION OF THE UNIVERSE.

The original state of things was, according to Lucretius, not unlike an infinite snowstorm. Infinite atoms were continually falling and falling through an infinite space. They fell thus in virtue of one of their inalienable properties, namely weight, which for ever bears them downwards. Though of different sizes, the velocity of their downward motion was still the same, for they fell through an unresisting medium. With us heavy things fell faster than very light ones, simply because of the resistance of the air, which they have to overcome. The universe was formed by the collision and coherence of these falling bodies. But how did this collision first take place? All the bodies were falling at an equal velocity, and so they could not overtake each other; and if they fell straight downwards—*i.e.*, in parallel courses—they could not jostle against each other. Evidently therefore, in their downward course, says Lucretius, they must tend at uncertain times, and at uncertain points, to swerve a little, but only a very little—not enough to be called a lateral movement. It was owing to this slight and incalculable swerving that the first collision of atoms took place. This collision at once produced a rebound, and this rebound again produced fresh collisions; and there was thus begun an ever-extending clashing and confusion amongst them, like that of

motes in sunbeams, which we may see, says Lucretius, "in never-ending conflict, skirmish and give battle, contending in troops, and never halting, driven about in frequent meetings and partings; so that you may guess from this what it is for first beginnings of things to be ever tossing about in the great void." In this war of atoms, some, when they clashed, bounded off each other, so as to leave large spaces between them; others bounded off so as only to leave small spaces,—the former kind producing such things as air and sunlight, the latter such things as stone and iron.

This different behaviour of the different atoms is due to their various shapes, some being round and smooth, some round and rough, some forked or pointed,—and so on. The denser substances are formed of forked atoms, which cannot touch without becoming entangled with each other, and are so unable to bound back to any great distance. The rarer and more subtle substances are formed of smooth and fine atoms.

And this same atomic movement which was the beginning of things, still continues to keep them what they are. It is a movement that has gone on from everlasting, and will always continue. Every object about us is in motion within itself, though we see it as a whole to be entirely still; for this atomic movement is infinitely far beneath the ken of the senses. We may conceive its nature, however, and its possibility, by the analogy of a distant flock of sheep, or the evolutions of two distant armies. The sheep, though in reality frisking, and butting each

other, seem to us but a stationary spot of whiteness; the two armies, though engaged in combat, appear to us but a stationary glitter. The tendency, too, of everything is still downwards, ever downwards; and the upward tendency of certain things arises only, in some cases, from a rebound; in others, as in the case of flame, from the substance in question being squeezed upwards by the pressure of other substances.

It will now be apparent yet farther, that matter and empty space must both be infinite. For if space were not infinite, the atoms, always falling, would be by this time lying in a solid mass on the floor of space; and if matter were not infinite, that infinity of combinations could not have been produced, of which the existing order of things is a survival of the fittest.

And it is partly from this conclusion that Lucretius disproves a doctrine that was current amongst some thinkers in his time,—a doctrine which nearly approaches the modern theory of gravitation, and was allied also with a conception of the sphericity of the earth, and the existence of life all round it. "Some teach," Lucretius says, "that all things press to the centre of the sum; that heavy bodies under the earth press upwards and are at rest on the earth, turned topsy-turvy, like the images of things in water; and that living things walk head downwards, and cannot tumble out of the earth into those parts of heaven below them." This theory of things he thus dismisses. The universe being infinite, there can be no centre to it. Secondly, even were there a centre, still space everywhere would yield to heavy bodies, and they

could never come to rest upon void, be that void centre or no centre.

We have already seen that the atoms are conceived of as having different shapes. It is further demonstrable, according to Lucretius, that the number of their shapes is finite. For if there were an infinite variety of shapes, some atoms would have to be of an infinite bulk, since limited bodies do not afford room for an infinite variety of detail in their form. Also, were the number of shapes of atoms infinite, there could be no fixed order in nature, but it would go on either infinitely improving or infinitely degenerating. But though the difference of forms is finite, of atoms of each form there is an infinite number; for the sum being infinite, and the number of parts finite, there must be an infinite variety of each kind, else the sum would be finite.

Here then we have an infinity of atoms of a finite variety of shapes; which, though they are thus far qualified, and are possessed also of gravity, have yet no properties individually that can appeal to the human sense. They have, for instance, no colour; and this statement Lucretius takes great pains to verify. Objects, he says, change their colour, but none of the properties of atoms changes; therefore colour cannot belong to the atoms. Nor can such colours as change into others be the product of a number of atoms of various colours. Look at blue bright sea-water, he says, and you will see that its changes of colour are evidently not such as could be produced by any mixture of variously-coloured particles.

Further—and he here comes to a deeper kind of reasoning—colours cannot exist without light,—nay, colours change with the way in which light falls on them, as in the case of the down on a dove's neck. He then goes on to analyse colour into a particular kind of blow given to the pupil of the eye, the nature of which varied with the shapes of the atoms that composed the coloured objects. Thus the sense of colour is but a particular form of the sense of touch, and is no quality in the atoms themselves, but is an accident of their shape. It is curious to find that Lucretius having given this explanation, in which there is really implied a profound truth, supplements it by the shallow and untrue observation that colour can be further proved not to reside in atoms, because the more you tear up a thing the fainter does the colour appear. At any rate, having thus established the fact that atoms have no colour, he goes on more summarily to show that they are without all other sensible qualities as well. All bodies are not vocal, all bodies are not odorous, all bodies do not possess cold or heat; and therefore atoms can have in themselves neither sound nor smell nor temperature. It is only by a series of infinitely complex combinations that the primal materials of things "step by step issue forth to the senses."

The exact stages in this evolution of the universe Lucretius does not profess to describe accurately, but he gives a general sketch of them which, in some points, is very like what is given us by the most advanced modern speculators. It was a long tim

he says, before the war of atoms produced anything like what we see now. As imagination penetrates back to the first conceivably visible state of things, it discerns nothing but a "strange and stormy medley"—the cosmic vapour of our modern theorists—in perpetual movement, massing itself together now in some parts, now in others, and leaving and filling up various shifting interspaces. At last "the parts began to fly asunder, and like to join to like, and mark off the members of the world, and every one of its mighty parts—*i.e.*, to separate high heaven from earth, and let the sea spread itself out apart, and also let the fires of the ether spread apart, pure and unmixed."

This process began as soon as the heavy bodies of earth "first met together, and took up the lowest positions." Having thus met, in virtue of their special shape they went on binding themselves together in a closer union, and forming a denser mass. In this process a large quantity of smoother particles were squeezed out of the earth, and these formed the sea, the sun, the stars, and the vault of heaven. First of all there issued out a fiery ether, which went up as we see mists going up now, and this formed itself into a vast cohering film, which encompasses and bounds our universe, and which we call the heavens. After this, squeezed out in like manner from the solidifying earth, followed the rudiments of the sun and moon, which gradually formed themselves into their present shapes, and turn round in air, midway between earth and heaven, because "they were neither heavy

enough to sink, nor light enough to glide along to the uppermost borders." Considering Lucretius's notions of the inherent weight, and consequent downward tendency, of all atoms, this at first sounds a little strange. He apparently means, however, that they were of such weight that the squeezing power of the earth could only avail to project them to a certain height.

When the material of the heavens and the heavenly bodies was thus withdrawn, an immediate change took place upon the earth's surface, which was at this time completely covered with water. In consequence of the amount of matter that had gone from it, there was in various places a sudden subsidence of the ground. In the hollows and depressions thus formed, the waters were at once collected, and the dry land appeared. The same sort of process still continued, but now with an added agency. "The heat of ether, and the rays of the sun, ever more and more by repeated blows compressed and buffeted the earth;" its softer parts were beaten down into plains, and its harder parts, which could not be thus beaten down, remained as hills; and thus the earth's surface assumed its present form.

Lucretius, it will thus be seen, conceived our universe as a kind of azure bubble, thrown off by the earth, and beaded with stars, the earth itself being the centre, and occupying probably far the larger part of the space enclosed by it; whilst the sun and moon swam, as it were, in the air, which filled all the intervening space between the earth and heaven. It is this

entire system which Lucretius called the world. He conceived the number of such worlds to be infinite, and he held that they were all falling for ever downwards, in much the same way as the atoms did in the beginning.

The knowledge of a large part of this universe he confesses to be far from exact. Of the movements of the heavenly bodies, especially, he can only give conjectural explanations; but one or other of those he offers, he feels certain must be the true one—for practical purposes, it does not much matter which. On one point, however, he professes that he has attained exactitude. His science has revealed to him the true size of the heavenly bodies. This, he says, is almost identical with that which it appears to us to be. This statement, absurd and indeed unmeaning as it is, if we were to consider it seriously, Lucretius yet arrived at by what may be called a shadow of true scientific method. He could not measure the size of the heavenly bodies directly, but there were other bright bodies whose size he could measure. He observed a variety of flames, noticing their size close at hand; he then retired to various distances, and noted them from thence; and the result of these observations, he fancied, was, that however far he retired from a luminous object its size never seemed to diminish. Thus, to produce the effect they do upon us, the actual size of the sun and moon need be no greater than what we see it to be. At the same time, however, he seems to think that extreme distance may have some very small effect in such cases; and thus, with respect to the size

of the stars, our vision may mislead us somewhat, "but only to a very small degree."

The sun, small as it is, may give the light and heat it does, from being, as it were, a well-head, whence light and heat gush out; or the heat may not dwell directly in itself, but it may inflame the air when in a susceptible state, as branches make a conflagration; or the sun may have about him a quantity of invisible heat, unaccompanied by fire, and this heat may increase the stroke of his rays.

Night is caused either by the sun, "when he strikes the uttermost part of heaven," having "blown out all his fires," or because "the same force which has carried his orb above the earth, compels it to pass below the earth."

Morning is caused either by the reappearance of the same sun, or "because fires meet together, and many seeds of heat are accustomed to stream together at a fixed time, which cause new sunlight to be born every day." Strange to say, he seems to think this singular theory, if anything, more probable than the former one. He gravely says that "from the summits of Ida it is reported that scattered fires are seen to appear at daybreak, and gradually collect themselves into an orb." And if, he adds, this is really what does happen, it is only in strict analogy with many of the most familiar phenomena of nature. Trees blossom at fixed times; rain and lightning are not very irregular; and at fixed times boys change their teeth.

In the same way, a new moon may be born every

day, figured according to its various phases. Or the moon may revolve like a spherical ball, of which one half is self-luminous and one half dark. Or it may be luminous all over, either of itself or by the light of the sun; and its phases may be caused by its carrying with it an invisible satellite that is perpetually eclipsing it. The eclipses of the sun, too, may be accounted for in the same way; or "the sun may be able, quite exhausted, to lose his fires at certain fixed times."

Such in broad outline is the Lucretian universe—the outcome of atoms that have in themselves no sensible qualities. Let us see now, more in detail, how Lucretius accounts for all the variety of substances into which we find they have combined themselves.

This variety, and the results of it, are due to the various shapes and sizes of the atoms, and their various ways of mixing. "There is nothing," says Lucretius, "which is apparent to sense that consists of one kind of first beginnings. There is nothing which is not formed by a mixing of seed." As an obvious instance and proof of this, we have the earth, which must contain within itself the seeds of all the things that spring out of it, such as water, fire, and vegetation. For each thing is what it is in virtue of being a combination, a mixture, a clinging together of atoms of certain various shapes, in certain various proportions. It is these various combinations of various atoms that give to things their different textures and properties; for "since seeds differ, there must be a difference in the spaces between the passages, the connections, the weights, the blows."

This hypothesis, says Lucretius, will explain all the facts of nature, and will be verified by them. Light, for instance, passes through horn; but rain is thrown off. Why? The atoms comprising horn leave in that substance spaces of a certain size and shape. The atoms that compose light are very small, and can pass through these spaces. The atoms that compose water are larger, and cannot. Again, wines flow through a strainer, but oil will not. This is because the elements of oil are larger, or more hooked and tangled, and so cannot be so easily separated. To put the matter generally, hard substances, such as diamonds and iron, are composed mainly of atoms that have many hooks, by which, the instant they touch each other, they are held together; fluid substances, such as water, are composed mainly of atoms without hooks, which can move with more or less freedom about each other; and gaseous substances are composed entirely of atoms of a finer and smaller nature still.

The various tastes, smells, sounds, and temperatures of things are due, too, to the various shapes of the atoms that compose them. Harsh tastes come from substances made up of rough, pointed, or hooked atoms; pleasant tastes, from substances made up of smooth atoms. The atoms of honey and milk, for instance, are smooth; those of wormwood rough. The creaking of a saw is made of rough atoms; beautiful music of small atoms; and so on.

More light will be thrown on this conception of things, when we come to see farther what is Lucretius's theory of sensation, and how he reduces all our percep-

tions to modes of touch. In the foregoing analysis of matter, the inconsistencies and incompleteness are of course obvious It will be enough, in passing, to mention the two most striking of these. One is, that though it is one of his great points that the atoms are far below the reach of sense, he seems continually to speak of them as though they could individually by their shape affect, or be detected, by the senses. The other is, that this application of the atomic theory quite fails to explain one of the chief phenomena of nature—that is, the change of qualities that takes place in a single substance, hot things becoming cold, sweet things rancid, and gaseous and fluid things solid. This, however, by the way. What we have now to do is to examine the theory of Lucretius, not to criticise it.

SECTION III.

THE INTERACTION OF MATERIAL SUBSTANCES.

We have thus far seen how the universe as it is, was evolved out of its original elements, and the few simple laws of which this evolution was the result. We have next to consider the more complex question of how it is maintained in its present state, with all its various movements and innumerable changes, and the constant uniform relation of its larger parts.

We have seen how atoms behaved in forming sub-

stances; we must now see why substances behave as they do when formed. Lucretius explains this by a doctrine we have already mentioned,—that nothing, however much appearances may say the contrary to us, is really at rest. We are to conceive of everything in constant motion—solids, fluids, and gases,—in motion within themselves, even when they are at rest relatively to other objects. It is in this way that the heavens are sustained above us from falling on the earth, and the earth sustained from falling on the heavens below; for the entire space between the two is pervaded by air in ceaseless motion, the particles of which are perpetually bounding and rebounding, striking against the earth on the one hand and the heavens on the other, and thus keeping the whole in place.

It might, Lucretius seems to think, appear doubtful how, according to his theory of the downward tendency of everything, air could sustain the earth. He therefore takes pains to emphasise especially the power that is in air, fine though its atoms be. Life, which, as we shall see soon, he considers to be atomic, can hold the body together, he says; and the living body does not feel the weight of its separate members. Our feet, for instance, are conscious of no pressure from above. In the same way air prevents the earth from having any weight with reference to the universe.

But we must not only conceive of all bodies as having within themselves this perpetual motion of their particles; we must also conceive all substances as being, as it were, in a perpetual state of evaporation. Minute particles of themselves are for ever streaming off their

surface. That this is so, we can tell in many cases by practical experiments; and we may thus infer that it is so in every case. We can tell that water is perpetually giving off a certain part of its own elements, by observing how clothes, stretched out to dry on the sea-shore, get saturated with a salt moisture. As we walk by the sea, too, a salt taste comes into our mouths. Scents, likewise, are instances of the same perpetual streaming off of atoms; and so also is colour, as we may see plainly where the sun shines through red or blue canvas, and shows us those colours projected on whatever objects the light falls on.

Thus there is throughout nature a variety of wholly unperceived agencies at work, secretly affecting whatever we can observe to happen, and, as we shall see presently, enabling us to observe and be conscious of it. An illustration of what Lucretius means by this doctrine, and of the use he made of it in explaining nature, is to be found in his account of the magnet, which he says attracts iron for this reason. From the magnet there proceeds perpetually a stream of atoms stronger and more violent than from most other bodies. This stream is perpetually creating a vacuum about the magnet. As soon as iron is placed in the neighbourhood of this vacuum, the air which is in the pores of the iron tries to rush to the vacuum, and fill it up. The iron, however, is of so tough and hard a nature, that the air cannot escape from it, and therefore carries the iron into the vacuum along with it. The magnet does not attract gold, because gold is too heavy for the air to move it; nor again does it

attract wood, because wood is so porous that the air rushing to the vacuum can escape of itself, without taking the wood with it.

Thus the whole universe is what it is, in virtue of this occult movement of everything. All matter is more or less porous, and every substance is ever being permeated and filtered through by emanations from other substances. "One thing," says Lucretius, "is seen to stream through stones, another through gold, another still to go out through silver and brass. Form is seen to stream through this passage, heat through that; and one thing is seen to pass through by the same way more quickly than other things. The nature of the passages compels it to be so, varying in manifold wise, owing to the unlike natures and textures of things."

SECTION IV.

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE AND SPECIES.

Nature, as we have considered it thus far, has been simply inorganic unconscious nature. We must now see the relation that life bears to this. Life and consciousness, according to Lucretius, are the products of a certain combination of substances, interacting on each other by a certain infinitely complex process of atomic movement. "Whatever things we perceive

to have sense," he says, "you must admit to be all composed of senseless first beginnings." This fact he seems to consider evident on the very face of things. We can see instances of it daily before our eyes. "Living worms spring out of dung." Rivers, leaves, and glad pastures change into cattle, cattle change their substance into our bodies, and often our bodies are converted into the energy of wild beasts and vultures. Therefore, by a process similar to that by which dry woods are dissolved into flames, does nature change all foods into living bodies, and engender out of them all the senses of living creatures."

But this change of inorganic into organic substances does not take place suddenly. It has to be brought about through a number of advancing stages, and it is only certain substances that are capable of this change. And yet Lucretius seems to think, on the whole, that under favourable circumstances almost everything might develop the qualities of protoplasm. These qualities depend on the minuteness and the shape of the atoms, and also on their motions, their arrangements, and their positions. "None of which requisites," he says, "we find in woods and clods, and yet even these things, when they have become rotten with rain, bring forth worms, because bodies of matter driven from their ancient arrangements by a new condition are combined in the same way as when living creatures are to be begotten." Further, if this observation of the facts of nature be not sufficient to convince us that life is evolved out of things that are not living, the following argument will put the matter beyond a

doubt. If the atoms that compose conscious bodies were themselves conscious, then the atoms that men are made of would have the qualities of men, and would, amongst their other capabilities, be able to laugh, and to prosecute scientific inquiries, which is manifestly absurd. It is therefore perfectly evident, even in starting, that life is merely a mode of matter; and when we come to consider the nature of life more in detail, it will be more apparent still.

Such, then, being the nature of life, what was the history of its gradual appearance upon the earth? The answer of Lucretius to this is curious in two ways—in its anticipation of the most modern views, and in the unconscious survival in it of the most ancient. Lucretius in this connection seems to conceive of the earth in something the same way as Thales did—as a large animal. No sooner, he says, had the earth assumed its present shape, with its seas and lands, its level plains and its mountains, than there began to grow out of its surface herbage, flowers, and trees, in the same way as feathers and bristles grow out of the skins of birds and beasts. Then—though why the events followed each other in this order is not explained—the earth put forth substances which developed into living beings. First came eggs, which, lying in various places all over the ground, were hatched by the growing warmth of spring. Then, under the joint action of heat and moisture, the earth developed wombs, which lay on its surface, as the eggs did, and were attached to the soil by roots. Within these—how is not stated—infants developed them-

selves; "and when," says Lucretius, "the warmth of these infants, flying the wet and craving the air, had opened them in the fulness of time, nature would turn to that spot the pores of the earth, and constrain it to yield from its open veins a liquid most like to milk." Such were the first beginnings of animal life. All kinds of creatures, without any act of sexual generation, sprang direct from the earth; and so, indeed, says Lucretius, they still continue to do, but not in such numbers as formerly. For the earth grows old as a woman does; and, like a woman's, her bearing powers get gradually worn out. Once the earth of herself produced "the huge bodies of wild beasts," complete and ready-made. Now, of herself, she can only bring forth such little creatures as worms and the like.

Once, too, of herself, she brought forth corn-crops, and vines, and fruit-trees, which we can now only get by sowing the ground and tilling it; and as far as the earth's productions go, things get worse and worse every year, and to wring the same results out of her requires year by year more toilsome labour.

To return to the question of animal life: the earth in her prime, in her early period of exuberant fecundity, gave birth at random to every conceivable kind of creature, perfect and imperfect. Some were blind, some were dumb, some were mere trunks without limbs, some were sexless. A large number of these, for a variety of reasons, could not propagate themselves. Single or few specimens were produced, and forthwith

perished. Amongst those that were able to propagate themselves, a struggle for existence set in as they increased and multiplied; and in this struggle those animals were eliminated that were not able to defend themselves. "For," says Lucretius, "in the case of all things which go on breathing the breath of life, either craft or courage, or else speed, has from the beginning of its existence protected and preserved each particular race." The only exception is in the case of domestic animals, which, though they may in some ways be weakly themselves, have survived through man's protection.

This theory of the origin of species, it will be seen, is in one of its main features identical with the Darwinian. It attributes exactly the same results to the struggle for existence. But in another point it is entirely and expressly opposed to it. According to the Darwinian theory, all life began in a single simple form, which slowly differentiated itself, through an unexplained tendency of each organism, not only to reproduce its own likeness in its offspring, but also to reproduce this likeness with slight incalculable variations. In this way varieties of organisms kept increasing, all having sprung from the same parent stem, and spreading out into separate branches, which would, if left to themselves, be for ever branching out anew. The rigours of climate, the difficulty of obtaining food, and so on, acted like a force that stripped from such a tree all its weakly twigs, and broke its unsound branches, leaving those only growing that were strong enough to withstand it. In various places this force

varied, and various textures and forms of branches were thus in various places left growing, and destroyed by it. The innate tendency to variation in animals, which the Darwinian theory thus postulates, was conceived of dimly by some of the earliest Greek philosophers, who held that animals only developed legs, and various other parts of their bodies, when the waters dried up that originally covered the earth, and they were thus forced to adapt themselves to a life on land. But all tendency to variation in species is what Lucretius expressly denies. "All living things," he says, "go on after their own fashion, and all preserve their distinctive differences according to a fixed law of nature." It will thus be seen that the Darwinian theory is an advance on, and differs from, the Lucretian mainly and essentially in this—the way in which the variety is produced which is the subject of the selecting process common to both systems.

SECTION V.

THE NATURE OF LIFE AND CONSCIOUSNESS.

The vital principle, though not identical with the body, is demonstrably itself as truly material as the body. The close connection of the two is a proof of this. For the mind moves the limbs, rouses the body from sleep, and alters the countenance. The mind, too, suffers

with the body. A wound will often cause loss of consciousness, for instance; and that thing must be material which is thus affected by material blows. The vital principle, according to Lucretius, consists of two kinds of ether of surpassing subtlety, diffused through the entire body, and closely connected with each other. Considering how quick are all our thoughts and impulses, the atoms of which these ethers are composed must be perfectly spherical and smooth, and exceedingly small. The entire volume of it must also weigh very little, as after life has left the body, the body does not perceptibly weigh less, any more than wine does when it has lost its flavour or its bouquet.

We are not, however, to suppose that the nature of this ether is single, says Lucretius. It can, on the contrary, be readily analysed into four parts. "For" —so his words run—"a certain subtle spirit mixed with heat quits men at death, and then the heat draws air along with it,—there being no heat which has not air too mixed with it; for since the nature of heat is rare, many first beginnings of air must move about through it." Thus the nature of the vital principle is found to be threefold (*i. e.*, there is the certain 'subtle spirit,' heat, and air). And yet these things all together are not sufficient to produce sense, since the fact of the case does not admit that any of these can produce sense-giving motions, and the thoughts which a man turns over in his mind. Thus some fourth nature must be added to these. This is altogether without a name. There is nothing exists

more nimble or more fine, or of smaller or smoother elements. It first transmits the sense-giving motions through the frame,—for it is first stirred, made up as it is of small particles. Next, the heat, and the unseen force of the spirit, receive the motions; then the air; then all things are set in motion, the blood is stirred, and every part of the flesh is filled with sensation.

The mutual connection of these four elements of the vital principle, Lucretius admits that it is very hard to explain. All he says he can do is to illustrate it by an analogy. "As in the flesh of any living creature there is a smell and a heat and a savour, and yet out of these there is made up one single bulk of body, so the heat and the air, and the unseen forces of the spirit, mixed together, produce a single nature, together with that nimble force, which transmits to them from itself the origin of motion, by means of which sense-giving motion first takes its rise through the fleshy frame."

The effects of these various elements are perpetually being visible in the actions and the characters of living things. An angry fire flashes from the eyes in virtue of the elements of heat. Fear is due to the operation of a spirit, which is of a low temperature. A calm cheerfulness is due to a preponderance of the element of still air. Thus passionate animals, such as lions, have in them more of the heat principle. Shuddering, fearful animals, like stags, have more of the chilly principle. Oxen have more of still air. Men have all these elements more equally mixed in them. It is true that they inherit various tendencies

which they cannot utterly eradicate; but the bent given us by our parents is so small, that practically we may overcome it.

Such is the vital principle, and though dwelling in the body and permeating the body, it is not, says Lucretius, as some contend, a mere harmonious working together of the body. For the body is often sick, whilst the mind is enjoying pleasure: often the reverse is the case. Then, too, whilst the body is lying senseless in sleep, our mind is often awake, and is feeling joy and sorrow. Farther, life still stays in the body when many limbs have been lopped off; "and yet the same life, when a few bodies of heat have been dispersed abroad, and some air has been forced out through the mouth, abandons at once the veins, and quits the bones. And thus we see that all bodies do not alike uphold existence, but rather that those seeds which constitute wind and heat cause life to stay in the limbs."

This vital ether, which has been analysed into four constituent elements, from another point of view divides itself into two—viz., the Mind and Soul, which, however, do but "make up a single nature." The mind is the directing principle, and has its seat in the heart. "All the rest of the soul disseminated throughout the body obeys and moves at the beck and movement of the mind.

"The mind has more to do with holding the fastnesses of life, and has more sovereign sway over it, than the power of the soul. For without the understanding and the mind, no part of the soul can maintain itself in the frame for the smallest fraction of

time. The mind alone, itself, knows for itself, and rejoices for itself, at times when the impression does not move either the soul or the body together with it. But when the mind is excited by some vehement apprehension, we see the whole soul feel in unison through the limbs; the cheeks turn pale, the skin sweats, and often the whole body faints away."

It will thus be seen that Lucretius, though he does not seem to have elaborated his entire conception of the matter into perfect clearness, conceives of the vital principle as a kind of ether, pervading the body, with a nucleus of a special and peculiar sensitiveness, which had its special seat in the breast. This nucleus was extremely sensitive to any appulse from without; it was capable also of spontaneous movement. Its movements, when not violent, it could confine to itself; but if they passed a certain limit, they at once communicated themselves to the rest of the ether, and this in its turn affected the parts of the body through which it was diffused. We shall, however, understand the matter better when we have examined more in detail the way in which Lucretius conceives the outer world to reach this ether, and produce in it the sensation of consciousness.

SECTION VI.

LUCRETIUS'S THEORY OF VISION.

We have seen clearly that Lucretius reduces all the senses to modes of touch. Taste, smell, and sound are touches more or less violent of particles of matter, driven in various ways against our bodies, and penetrating in various places into them. We have seen also in what a perpetual war and turmoil he conceives all material things to be; so that it is impossible for us to move anywhere, or in any direction, without walking, as it were, through a cloud of dust, that beats perpetually on us from every side. Sounds, smells, and tastes are therefore ever beating on us, and finding their way into us, each at its appointed door.

This is easy enough to comprehend. That vision is produced in an exactly similar way, may not at first be comprehended quite so easily. Such, however, is the theory of Lucretius. Just as smells stream off some bodies, and tastes off others, or as from some smells and tastes stream off together, so from all bodies alike there is yet another kind of emanation that is perpetually proceeding. Nothing visible exists that is not perpetually shedding off from its surface a picture or image of itself. Such pictures "are like films, and may each be named a rind." These films are perpetually being shot forward, in every direction, following one after another with extraordinary rapidity, each film being a complete pic-

ture in itself, and inflicting a separate blow on any object in its way. They are of extreme thinness and fineness of texture, and as soon as ever they touch any rough substance, such as stone or wood, they are instantly dashed to pieces. This is the reason why such substances are opaque. There are other substances, such as glass, whose vacant spaces are of such a shape that the films can pass unbroken through them; and this is the reason why such substances are transparent. There are, again, other substances at once very smooth and very hard, such as mirrors, through which the films cannot pass, and which yet cannot break them up and destroy them. By a sort of rebound, therefore, they are sent back again. This is the explanation of the phenomenon of reflection.

As to the laws by which these films move, there seems to have been some confusion in the mind of Lucretius. The obvious fact that we cannot see round corners, must have led him to conceive of their general movement being only in a straight line; and he had studied the matter with sufficient accuracy to show him that "nature," as he expresses it, "constrains all things, when they are carried back and recoil from things, to be given back at angles equal to that at which they impinged." But, in spite of this, he imagines there are certain films that wander about in tortuous courses, apparently under the control of no law, straying far away from the objects from which they originally proceeded; and other films, he imagines, which have no corresponding objects at all, and which have not emanated from the surface of anything.

The movement of all these films is extremely rapid, as one may prove in a moment by observing how, "as soon as the brightness of water is set down in the open air, if the heaven is starry, in a moment the clear radiant constellations of ether imaged in the water correspond to those in heaven." It is the breaking of these films against the eye that produce vision. They are driven against it one after another, packed together as though they were the pages of a picture-book. Did they merely come one at a time, they are so fine that no one could see them; but when "thrown off constantly and repeatedly, they yield a visible image.

As to the structure of the eye, and the way these films are received by it, Lucretius says nothing. He treats the eye as he treats the palate. The two organs each sufficiently explain and illustrate the other. As it is the nature of the one to taste, it is the nature of the other to see.

Between, however, what the eyes really show us, and what we may fancy they show us, he distinguishes with an accuracy and acuteness that in later times the world was long in recovering. The eyes, he says, do not see distance. All they show us are certain shapes and colours, as though they were all painted on a flat sheet of paper, and thus without solidity. The perception of distance is an act not of sight but of unconscious inference. It is produced in this way. Every film, as it is shot along through the air, drives a certain amount of air before it; and the greater the distance that a film has travelled before reaching the eyes, the greater are the power and the volume of this air. This air, says

Lucretius, "brushes the eyes as it enters them, and so passes through. The consequence is, that we see how far distant each thing is. And the greater the quantity of air that is driven on before it, and the larger the current that brushes our eyes, the more distant each different thing is seen to be." Nor must we wonder that we only see a single object when the sight of it is produced by a continuous number of films striking our eyes. "For thus when wind too beats us with successive strokes, and when piercing cold streams, we are not wont to feel each single particle of the wind or cold, but rather the whole result; and then we perceive blows take effect upon our body, just as if something or other were beating it, and giving us a sensation of its body outside."

We shall realise this whole theory more vividly if we examine the way in which Lucretius uses it to explain the phenomena of reflection, and in especial the reason why we seem to see objects *inside* mirrors or reflecting surfaces. "The case," he says, "is really merely the same as when we see things in their reality beyond a door." That vision, as will be plain enough, is caused by two separate airs, the air inside the doorway and the air outside it. Supposing there is a doorway twenty feet from us, and through the doorway we see a man standing twenty feet beyond it. The films, or images of the doorway, and the leaves of the door, carry to our eyes in reaching us the intervening air that is within the room; and from the volume of that, we infer instinctively that the doorway is at its actual distance from us. The films, or images of

the man beyond the doorway, carry to our eyes also a similar amount of the air that is within the room; but, in addition to this, they carry also an equal amount of the air from out of doors, and from this we infer instinctively that the man is at as great a distance from the door as the door is from ourselves. In the same way, two airs of different volume make us see reflected objects as though they were inside the surface that reflects them. It happens thus: Suppose a mirror to be twenty feet from us, the image of the mirror carries an air to our eyes, from the volume of which we at once infer the distance. The instant after we have felt this air, our pupil receives the image. We see the mirror, and we know how far off it is. Meanwhile an image of ourselves has been carried to the surface of the mirror, and in another instant rebounds back again to ourselves, and is received by the eyes. This image carries with it, as the image of the mirror did, another air, and an air of exactly the same volume, which follows the former air so closely, that the sensations produced by the two are practically united; and our first inference that the mirror was twenty feet from us, is supplemented now by the inference that our own form reflected in it is forty feet from us,—in other words, that it is as far inside the mirror as we are outside it.

"And now," says Lucretius, "to explain the other phenomena of reflection. The right side of our bodies is seen in mirrors to be on the left, because when the image comes and strikes on the plane of the mirror, it is not turned back unaltered, but is beaten out in a right line backwards,

just as if you were to take a plaster mask before it is dry and dash it over a pillar or beam, and it forthwith were to preserve the lines of its features undisturbed in front, and were to strike out an exact copy of itself straight backwards. The result will be, that the eye which was right will now be left, and conversely the left become the right. An image may also be so transmitted from one mirror to another that five or six images are often produced. And thus all the things that bask in the dimmest corners of a house may yet all be brought out through winding passages by the aid of a number of mirrors, so unfailingly does the image reflect itself from mirror to mirror; and when the left side is reflected it becomes the right side in the new image; then it is changed back again, and turns round to what it was. Moreover, all mirrors which form little sides possessing a curvature resembling our sides, send back to us images with their right, corresponding to our right, for one or other of two reasons; either because the image is transmitted from one side to another, and then, after it has been twice struck out, flies to us; or, it may be, because the image, when it has come to the mirror, wheels round, because the curved slope of the mirror teaches it to turn itself as we are turned. Again, you would think images step out and put down their feet at the same time with us, and mimic our actions. This happens because, from before whatever part of a mirror you move away, from that part forthwith no images can be reflected, since nature constrains all things, when they are carried back and recoil from things, to be given back as angles equal to those at which they impinged."

The sun, Lucretius says, blinds the eyes, because the images of it "are borne through the clear air with great downward force from on high, and strike the eyes, and disorder their fastenings."

We can see light things out of the dark, because

"when the black air first has taken possess of the eyes, the light air enters in afterwards, an 'eanses the black shadows of the other air; for this . great deal more nimble and subtle and efficacious." We cannot, however, see dark things out of the light, "because the grosser air of darkness follows behind and quite fills all the openings, and blocks up the passages of the eyes, not letting the images of any things at all be thrown into the eyes to move them."

When "all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye," this is because "greenish-yellow seeds stream from the man's body, and meet the images of things; and many, too, are mixed up in the eyes."

When distant objects look blurred and hazy to us —when square towers, for instance, seem to be round, and to lose all their angles—"this is because, while the images are borne in through much air, the air by repeated collisions blunts the stroke."

In spite, however, of these, and many other optical delusions, we must not admit that the eyes can in any way deceive us. The deception is due to another cause.

A few familiar instances will explain to us the real nature of the case. When we are sailing, the coasts seem to move away from us, not we from them. The stars, which are really in constant movement, seem, if we watch them on a clear night, to be completely at rest; and again, if we watch them on a cloudy night, through the driving rack, they seem to be moving far faster than they do. But in these cases it is not the eyes that cheat us; it is the mind that

makes wrong inferences from the data given by sight. "It is the province of the eyes," says Lucretius, "to observe in what spot soever light and shade are; but whether the lights are still the same or not, and whether it is the same shadow which was in this spot that is now passing to that, this the reason of the mind, and only it, has to determine; nor can the eyes know the nature of things." Light and shade—it is this, and this alone, we can be really said to *see*. Distance and solidity—in a word, the real figure and the real position of anything—this we do not see, but we infer. And if we would seek for the source of optical delusions, we must seek it only in "the mental suppositions which we add of ourselves, taking those things as seen which the senses do not see. For nothing is harder than to separate manifest facts from doubtful, which the mind straightway adds on of itself."

SECTION VII.

THE MIND AND SENSE.

Closely connected with his theory of vision is Lucretius's explanation of the chief phenomena of the mind, and especially the will and the imagination. Images of things, as we have seen, he conceives to be wandering about everywhere; and these, as has been observed before, are of various kinds. Those we have

been just considering are apparently conceived of as discharged exclusively in straight lines, and gradually dissolving after they have travelled a certain distance. But besides these, there are others of "a far thinner texture than those that take possession of the eyes." Of such thin images the air is full. They are floating hither and thither in incalculable courses; and when they meet, they continually get entangled with each other, "like cobwebs, or pieces of gold-leaf." Hence they are each made up of countless actual things; but taking each as a whole, it is usually a thing with no existing counterpart. Some of these composite images are forms of possible though not of actual things; others of things that are in their very nature impossible, such as centaurs, or satyrs, or chimæras, which are formed from the chance combinations of images of men, and horses, and goats, and other animals. "That this must be so," says Lucretius, "it is easy enough to see. For so far as one result is like another, that which we see with the mind and with the eyes must be produced in a like way. And since I have shown that we perceive a line, for instance, by means of films or images thrown off its surface, you may see that the mind is moved by a precisely similar cause, with only this one difference, that it perceives much thinner images." Here we have the explanation of dreams. In sleep the mind only wakes; and, undisturbed by those thicker images to which the eyes are sensitive, it is beset by wandering multitudes of the thinner kind that has been just described—images, for the most part, probably, fantastic and composite, but

sometimes intact, and corresponding with actual things, as when our dead seem to come back to us and visit us.

These images, too, seem to move and act like living creatures. Why? The explanation Lucretius gives of this is very curious. This appearance of movement is produced in much the same way as is that of the figures in a zoötrope. We have already seen that Lucretius seems never to conceive of these images as wandering about, or being discharged singly, but as closely following each other, or as being packed closely together like the leaves of a picture-book. And the apparent movements of the dream-images are produced by a succession of such images of a single object, each in a slightly different position.

Lucretius's theory of dreams will help us at once to understand his theory of the imagination. Imagination, according to him, is little else than a selected dreaming. When we are asleep the dream-images have us at their mercy, and assail and excite our minds without explicable law. But when we are awake, and our body is sensitive to all external influences, the mind is more fenced about: and just as the bodily eyes practically see only those things that they pay attention to (for, be they never so plain, if we do not attend to them, "it is just the same as if they were far away and distant"), so the mind, unless it pays attention to these thin images, can in our waking moments perceive none of them. When, however, the mind wishes to imagine a certain thing, what happens is this: it strains its powers to see images of a certain

kind; and such images are, according to the Lucretian theory, always about us in innumerable multitudes. If we want to imagine a lion, for instance, there are always lion-images in our neighbourhood. Our mind need but attend to them, and it will at once see them. This is the reason why, "when the will has occurred to any one to think of a thing, the mind does on the instant think of that very thing."

"And now," says Lucretius, "I will explain how it comes to pass that we are able to step out when we please, and how it is given us to move about our limbs, and what cause is wont to send forward the great load of our body. I say that images of walking first present themselves to our mind, as we said before. Then the will arises; for no one wills to do anything until his mind has first determined what it wills. From the very fact that it first determines such a thing, there is an image of that thing. When, therefore, the mind bestirs itself in such a way as to will to walk and step out, it strikes at the same moment the force of the soul, which is spread over the whole body, throughout the limbs and frame; and this is easily done, since the whole is held in close union with the mind. Next, the soul in its turn strikes the body, and thus the whole mass by degrees is set in motion. Besides this the body becomes rarefied, and the air enters in, in great quantities, through the opened pores, and is thus distributed into the most minute parts of the body. In this way, then, by these two causes acting in two different ways, the body after the fashion of ships is carried on by sails and wind. And herein it need not excite any surprise that such very minute bodies can steer bodies that are so heavy, and turn them about; for wind, though of a fine and subtle body, can push on a large ship, and one hand can direct it to any point you like."

It will be seen from the above passage that the entire theory of Lucretius on these points betrays a certain confusion of thought. Will, he says, arises in the mind on a certain image being presented to the imagination. But he holds it to be also equally true that each act of imagination must be preceded by will. What is the cause, then, of that initial act?

The answer to this question is one of the most curious things in his whole system. Though in treating of the will and the imagination he seems to conceive of the latter as solely the producer of the former, yet in another place he fully recognises the fact that the former is also the producer of the latter; and he ascribes to it, in this capacity, all the attributes of absolute and undetermined freedom. The human will is self-determining; it is the producer of succeeding circumstances; but, to a great extent, at least, it is not the product of preceding circumstances. It is a "man's own will," he says, "that makes for each a beginning." And again, "The power has been wrested from the Fates, by which we go forward whither the will leads each." Thus eager horses on the race-course cannot leap forward so quickly as the mind desires. Here the first cause is the mind. It is from the mind that the motion is transmitted through the body. Such cases as these are plainly quite distinct from those in which we are propelled onwards by a blow from without. "For do you not perceive," he says, "that though in this case there is an outward force that pushes men on, there is yet something in our breast sufficient to struggle against and resist it? And when this something chooses, the

store of matter is impelled sometimes to change its course through the frame, and after it has been forced forward is reined in." Hence, Lucretius argues, it is evident that all "motion cannot be linked together, nor a new motion always spring from another in fixed order." The mind is atomic, and therefore this freedom of the mind is the result of a certain freedom from conditions in atomic movement. "There must, besides blows and weights, be another cause of motion, from which this power of free action has been begotten in us." This cause is none other than that tendency of the atoms, which in the very beginning he was obliged to postulate, to deflect continually a little, here and there, from their downward course; without which, as we have seen, they would never have jostled against each other, but would have gone on falling to all eternity in parallel lines, and at their original distances.

It certainly seems at first sight that, according to this theory, not the mind only would be delivered from natural law, but that there would be no uniformity in nature anywhere. And Lucretius nowhere offers any direct explanation of this difficulty. It seems not improbable, however, that could we get to the bottom of his conception, we should find that, the mind being according to him the subtlest and most mobile of all material things, the atoms composing it were able to retain the whole of their original freedom; whilst in the case of all other substances, it had been overcome by their weight and their coarser texture.

SECTION VIII.

THE MORTALITY OF MIND AND SOUL.

We have seen how closely mind and soul are in the Lucretian theory connected with the body. From this theory Lucretius deduces further, that mind and soul cannot live as soon as that connection is severed. The vital principle is not the body, but it is held by the body, and it grows and changes with the body's capacities for holding it. Under some of its aspects, though he never says as much, Lucretius seems to have conceived of this principle as a kind of subtle and powerful secretion of the body,—a sort of potent gas or ether, generated by the flesh and blood, and reacting on it.

The following are the various arguments by which he seeks to demonstrate that, if the mind and soul are essential to the life of the body, the body is also essential to the life of mind and soul, and that all consequently perish and are dissolved together. In the first place, mind and soul being, as has been shown, made up of the smallest atoms, they will be spilt abroad as water is when the body—the vessel that contains them —is broken. Also, we see mind makes its first appearance when the body does; it grows with the body, it declines with the body, and therefore, according to all analogy, it will perish with it. The mind is subject to pain as the body is; therefore, according to all analogy, it will be subject to death also. Diseases of the

body, drink, and other excesses, disorder the mind, and the mind is often healed by medicine as the body is. Here is another symptom of the mind's mortality.

Further, we see men die piecemeal,—the vital soul leaving the limbs one by one. Were the soul immortal, it would mass itself in the unaffected parts. This, however, it evidently does not do; for, if it did, such parts would manifest a greater amount of sense. The mind has its seat in a particular part of a man's body, just as hearing has its seat in the ear. But if the ear be cut off, it mortifies; and so, in like manner, when the body goes will the mind decay.

At death, if the mind was immortal, "it would not so much complain of dissolution as of getting rid of its vesture, like a snake, or of being turned out of doors."

Again, if the soul be immortal, "and can feel when separated from the body, we must suppose it to be provided with five senses. But neither eyes, nor nose, nor hand, nor tongue, nor ears, can exist for the soul by themselves, or perceive anything apart from the body."

Here is another fact to notice. Men in various ways—in fighting, for instance—lose their limbs, and go on with their occupation, if violently excited, without perceiving their loss. Meanwhile the limbs lie on the ground quivering. Because they quiver, it is evident that they retain something in them of vital principle. But it is impossible to think that in each piece there is remaining an entire soul, for in that case a man would have many souls. The soul or vital principle has therefore been cut up and divided; but that which can be cut up cannot be immortal.

Again, if the soul is immortal, and comes into our body at birth, as some hold it does, why cannot we rem ber former existence? If between our two existences there has been such a break of consciousness, this is equal to death, and in no sense can the two existences be called the same. So we must admit that the soul which was before has perished.

Again, if the mind were waiting ready-made to join our bodies at the instant of birth, it would not be dispersed, as it is, over all the body, "so that even our very teeth seem to have life in them, but it would be in a den apart by itself." Or if, on the other hand, it oozes in from without, and so blends itself with all the limbs in that way, much more will it be mortal; for, says Lucretius, "whatever oozes in through another thing is dissolved, and therefore dies."

Again, we observe that living creatures, such as worms, spring out of dead bodies. It is plain from this that fragments of the soul are left in the body after death, therefore the soul is not immortal. For it is impossible to believe that these worms have each of them a separate and newly-made soul, that builds for itself a place to dwell in.

We must consider this also. The character of the various species of animals could not remain constant as it does, if ready-made souls could at random find their way into bodies. Some meet this by saying that souls are altered by the bodies they live in. But this, says Lucretius, is false, for this reason, "that whatever is changed is dissolved, and therefore dies." But if men say that human souls always cling to human bodies,

and so on, "how is it that a soul can change from wise to foolish, and that a child has no discretion?" Men will say that a soul grows weakly in a weakly body. But even if this be so, it must, from this very fact, be all the more admitted that the soul is mortal, since "changed so completely through the frame, it loses its former life and sense."

Again, what can be more ridiculous than the picture which the mind will have to present to itself if it conceives souls to have separate existences, before their respective bodies are prepared to receive them, than a throng of souls crowding about each body, as soon as it is completed, and struggling to get admission into it?

Finally, the analogy of all nature tells us that nothing can live but in its own especial element, or surrounded by its own special conditions. Trees cannot live in the sky, nor fish in fields, nor can we find blood in stones. "In like manner the nature of mind cannot come into being alone without body, nor exist far away from the sinews and blood."

SECTION IX.

THE IMPERFECTION AND MORTALITY OF THE UNIVERSE.

Such, then, is the Lucretian conception of the universe of mind and matter, or rather of matter

organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate—the joint work of chance and of necessity, without purpose, without a mind to guide it.

Even without any scientific knowledge of the origin of things, says Lucretius, the manifold and manifest defects of this universe would at once make it clear to us that it was the work of no divine creator. Much of the earth, for instance, is wastefully occupied by mountains and forests and seas. Extremes of climate make many regions unfit for human habitation. Whatever of the land is left for tillage, only yields its fruit grudgingly, when compelled by incessant toil and labour. And then, even when the fruits of the earth have sprung up, heat and storm and frost often cast them down untimely. Much of the earth is also infested by wild beasts, whose existence can fulfil no possible end. Children, too—the young of the noblest and chief of living creatures — are born miserable, wailing, and helpless; whilst the young of the lower animals grow up without any of the care that is needed by us, and nature yields to them all their food ungrudgingly.

What the beginning of this universe was we have already seen. As it is clear that it had a beginning, so, says Lucretius, it is equally clear that it will also have an end. Everything, in his eye, points to this conclusion. Fire, water, earth, and air, "out of which this sum of things is seen to be formed, do all consist of a body that had a birth, and is mortal. The whole world, therefore, must be reckoned of a like body. I see that the chiefest members and parts of the world

are begotten and destroyed anew; I may accordingly be sure that for heaven and earth as well there has been a time of beginning, and there will be a time of destruction." Let us consider the four elements separately. Earth is visibly mortal, because it is broken by the tread of men into dust, which is carried off by the winds; and water also eats away and dissolves it. Water is visibly mortal, because, though seas and rivers are always full, they are yet always losing their waters by evaporation, and also by absorption into the earth. Air is visibly mortal, because "it is changed over its whole body every hour, in countless ways. For whatever ebbs from things, is always borne into the great sea of air; and unless it in return were ever in many places ceasing to be air, and were also in return giving back bodies to things, all things would now have been dissolved and changed into air." The same, too, is the case with light and fire, which is for ever being supplied, and for ever wasted. All luminous things, the sun and the stars in heaven and the lamps and fires of earth, are always losing their substance by each fresh emission of light, and are consequently being recruited from some other element. Nor is any substance so solid that it does not waste away. Stone towers gradually waste and crumble. Rocks tumble off the tops of mountains. Even iron and brass are corroded, and gradually cease to be. They resolve themselves into some other form. All the elements, in fact, are at strife with one another, each preying upon and eating into the other. The sun, for instance, is always trying to drink

up the waters; but hitherto, says Lucretius, he has failed, so abundant are the fresh supplies of water; "though once, there is a tradition, that fire got the upper hand; and once, as the story goes, water reigned dominant in the fields."

From all this, we may conjecture the way in which the final disruption will take place. Nor, according to the theory of Lucretius, can there be wanting the chance of the catastrophe happening in yet another way. This universe which we call ours, is, as we have seen, a kind of azure bubble, with the earth in the middle of it. It is one only of an infinite number of similar worlds, which are all for ever falling downwards through the infinite void. It must be possible, therefore, according to the Lucretian theory, that between two or more universes there may at any moment be a collision.

It is, however, to causes from within that Lucretius seems chiefly to look for the final dissolution of things. Nor does he seem to think that this dissolution is an event that promises to be very distant. He conceives the world to have taken not many centuries in bringing itself to its present condition; and he bases this opinion on the fact that he knows of no history that goes farther back than the Theban war and the destruction of Troy. "Therefore," he says, "the truth, I think, is, that the whole has but a recent date, and the nature of the world is new, and has but lately had its beginning." But if, he concludes, there have been, as some men hold, other races and other civilisations, of whom all record has perished in some

great flood or earthquake, all the more must we admit the entire future destruction of the earth and heaven. "And in no other way are we ourselves proved to be mortals, except because we all alike in turn fall sick of the same disease with those whom nature has withdrawn from life."

SECTION X.

THE HISTORY OF HUMAN PROGRESS.

Having now seen what was the Lucretian conception of man's dwelling-place, and also of his origin and nature, it remains to consider the account given of his progress from his earliest to his latest stage; the history of society, of art, of manufactures; and, lastly of religion. And here, as has been observed already, we shall find Lucretius, in a rough and general way, in singular accordance with the most modern speculation, and entirely opposed to a number of fanciful theories, such as that of the state of nature, and so forth, which have been current in later times.

Men at first, says Lucretius, were savage, hardy creatures, scarcely to be distinguished from t lower animals, whom indeed they had not yet learnt to subjugate or use for food. They had neither fire, nor clothing, nor shelter, neither laws nor religion. They felt no wonder and no awe at nature. They acquiesced

quietly in her courses. Their struggle for food, and to protect themselves against the wild animals, occupied all their time and thoughts. Having no leisure for reflection, they neither imagined gods nor feared them. In time they took a step forward. They learnt the use of fire, probably from the ignition of wood in forests, through the rubbing together of the branches. Having thus discovered fire, they learnt to apply it to cooking, from observing how the heat of the sun mellowed fruits, and improved the taste of them. Then by chance they discovered the use of metals, and how to use and work them, in the following way. When large forests caught fire, either from lightning or from some other cause, streams of various metals would often gush out of the veins of the heated earth. "And when men saw them afterwards cool into lumps, and glitter on the earth with a brilliant gleam, they would lift them up, attracted by the light and polished lustre, and would see them to be moulded in a shape the same as the outline of the cavities in which each lay. Then it would strike them that these might be moulded by heat, and cast in any shape soever." Gradually also they learnt to subdue and slay the wild animals, and use their skins for clothing; and they also made huts for themselves.

They now entered on a new stage of existence, of which the most important feature was monogamy. Here, says Lucretius, we have the source of all subsequent improvement—indeed, of the real humanisation of humanity. For now it was that the family affections sprang up round separate homes and firesides.

"The fire made their chilled bodies less able to bear the frost beneath the canopy of heaven, and Venus impaired their strength, and children with their caresses soon broke down the haughty temper of parents. Then, too, neighbours began to join in a league of friendship, mutually desiring neither to do nor to suffer harm; and asked for indulgence to children and womankind, when, with cries and gestures, they declared in stammering speech that meet it is for all to have mercy on the weak. And though harmony could not be established without exception, yet a very large portion observed their agreements with good faith, or else the race of man would then have been wholly cut off, nor would the breed have continued their generations to this day."

Most of this gradual progress was due, especially so far as material improvement went, to the special genius of individuals; and accordingly, for some time knowledge was power, and men of intellect ruled the rest. For it was only gradually and with difficulty that mind obtained any mastery over matter. At first men used all the metals promiscuously. They made axes and tools out of gold and silver, and only by long experience found out that these were not so serviceable as the harder metals. At last they made this discovery; and then the harder metals—such as copper, and, lastly, iron—were for a time looked upon as more precious than gold.

In the same gradual way did men learn all the other arts and ordinances of life. The art of weaving followed on the discovery of iron, "because the loom is fitted with iron, and in no other way can such finely polished things as the details of the loom's machinery be made. And nature impelled men to

work up the wool before womankind,—for the male sex in general far excels the other in skill, and is far more ingenious; until the rugged countrymen so upbraided them with it, that they were glad to give it over into the hands of women, and take their share in supporting hard toil."

Thus gradually, through repeated struggles and repeated failures, did the civilisation of man grow—the work of the industry and labour of the many directed by the sagacity of the few.

Whilst all this was going on, Lucretius conceives an important change to have taken place at one distinct stage. "Kings began to build towns and lay out a citadel as a place of refuge for themselves, and divided cattle and lands, and gave to each man in proportion to his personal beauty and strength of intellect." Afterwards riches began to get more unequal. The few contrived to centre in themselves most of the goods of the many; gold too—though how, Lucretius does not say—grew to be looked on both as a sign and a constituent of riches, sought after by all, and amassed by some. Thus a new factor, a new power, was introduced into life—the source of half life's present misery. Riches—a false aim—had now arisen to lure men on; and the possession of riches now gave more power than the possession of intellect. Thus all things were turned upside down—the criterion of personal merit, and the general idea of what is happy or desirable in life.

Two things now remain for us to consider—the rise of language, and the rise of religion, both of which were wanting to the earliest races of men.

As to language, says Lucretius, the popular notion that it was invented by some particular man, who at a certain time invented a name for everything, is nothing but sheer folly. For "why," he asks, "should this particular man be able to denote all things by words, and to utter the various sounds of the tongue, and yet at the same time others be supposed not to have been able to do so? Again, if others, as well as he, had not made use of words amongst themselves, whence was implanted in this man the previous conception of its use? or how could one man constrain and force many to learn the names of things, or, when learnt, to use them?" Far from having been taught in this way, language shaped itself slowly, and in the most ordinary course of nature. "Nature impelled men to alter the various sounds of the tongue, and use struck out the names of things, much in the same way as the inability to speak is seen to drive some children to the use of gestures, when it forces them to point with the finger at the things that are before them." Nor is there anything strange in this, "since dumb brutes," says Lucretius, "and wild beasts, are accustomed to give forth distinct and varied sounds, when they have fears and pains, and when joys are rife." Thus dogs give quite distinct barks, when enraged, or when feeding their whelps, or when giving an alarm at the approach of thieves. The same is the case, too, with all other animals. "Therefore, if different sensations compel creatures, dumb though they be, to utter different sounds, how much more natural is it that men in those times should have been able to denote dissimilar things

by many different words? Whilst as for music and poetry, and every kind of musical modulation, this they learnt from the birds; "whilst the whistlings of the zephyrs through the hollow reeds first taught peasants to blow into hollow stalks."

And now, in conclusion, let us see what the Lucretian account is of the rise of religion. Man at first, as has been observed already, he says explicitly, had no trace of it. Modern theorists seek its origin in the wonder of early man at the phenomena of nature, and first amongst these, at the movements and effects of the sun. This, strangely enough, Lucretius seems to anticipate, and contradicts explicitly. "Never," he says, "would the early race of man with loud wailing call for the daylight and the sun, wandering terror-stricken over the fields in the shadows of night, but silent and buried in sleep would they wait till the sun with rosy touch had carried light into heaven; for, accustomed as they had been from childhood always to see darkness and light begotten in succession, never would any wonder come over them, nor any misgiving that never-ending night would cover the earth, and the light of the sun be withdrawn for evermore." Religion was the result, Lucretius thinks, of a deliberate and a later-developed kind of reflection,—though he hardly distinguishes this with sufficient clearness from the sort of wonder he here denies man to have experienced. In time, he says, men observing that the system of heaven and the seasons came round in regular succession, tried and failed to find out by what causes this was brought about; and at length were

compelled to postulate the existence of gods, to whose action these phenomena were to be attributed.

But besides this, religion had another origin yet. "Men would see in waking mind glorious forms, and they would see them in sleep of yet more marvellous size of body. To these then they would attribute sense, because they seemed to move their limbs and to utter lofty words suitable to their glorious aspect and surpassing powers. And they would give them life everlasting, because their face would ever appear before them, and their form abide; and because they could not believe that beings possessed of such powers would lightly be overcome by any force; and they would be pre-eminent in bliss, because none of them was ever troubled with the fear of death, and because at the same time, in sleep, they would see them perform many miracles, yet feel, on their part, no fatigue from the effort."

The meaning of this singular passage will be explained if we remember the theory of wandering-films, or images, which has been described already, and will lead us up to Lucretius's theology, with which we may fitly close our account of his scientific system.

The glorious forms just alluded to are nothing but wandering films,—some of the finer sort, only perceived by the mind; some of the coarser sort, that excite vision. What, then, was their origin? They are not things that have no such counterpart. They have been thrown off by actual bodies. But by what bodies? By the bodies of a certain race of beings which, with a certain amount of fitness, may be called

gods, as being superior in happiness and in beauty to ourselves, but who have no care or power over us or over the universe; and who are just as much a product of the collision of atoms as it or we. These beings dwell in the spaces between the various worlds or universes,—though how they can breathe there, or what they can rest on, or subsist on, or do to promote their supposed enjoyment, or what shape the world can be that they inhabit, Lucretius does not tell us. There, however, he suffers them to exist,—a gratuitous superstition it must seem to us—a surviving rudiment of a former system, answering no purpose in his own, and only introducing into it incongruity and difficulty. And not only does he suffer these gods to exist, but some of the films thrown off by their bodies to wander hither into this world of ours, and to delude those that see them into supposing them to be the actual personal presence of powers that guide and have formed the universe.

We have now ended our survey of the scientific system that Lucretius wished to expound, and to enforce upon the world. We will now go on to take a survey of the poem itself, which he thought the fittest form in which to embody it; and we shall then see not only how he handled in verse a thing so refractory as his main subject, but what were the sort of uses he designed the explanation of it to subserve, and his views of that human life and nature which he was so anxious that his discoveries should illuminate.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POEM OF LUCRETIUS.

"Ay, but I meant not thee; I meant not her,
Whom all the pines of Ida shook to see
Slide from that quiet heaven of hers, and tempt
The Trojan, while his neat-herds were abroad;
Nor her that o'er her wounded hunter wept
Her Deity false in human-amorous tears;
Nor whom her beardless apple-arbiter
Decided fairest. Rather, O ye Gods,
Poet-like, as the great Sicilian called
Calliope to grace his golden verse—
Ay, and this Kypris also—did I take
That popular name of thine to shadow forth
The all-generating powers and genial heat
Of Nature, when she strikes through the thick blood
Of cattle, and light is large, and lambs are glad
Nosing the mother's udder, and the bird
Makes his heart voice amid the blaze of flowers:
Which things appear the work of mighty Gods."

—TENNYSON, "Lucretius."

BOOK I.

The poem thus begins:—

"Mother and mistress of the Roman race,
Pleasure of gods and men, O fostering
Venus, whose presence breathes in every place,
Peopling all soils whence fruits and grasses spring,

And all the water's navigable ways,
  Water and earth and air and everything,
Since by thy power alone their life is given
To all beneath the sliding signs of heaven;

Goddess, thou comest, and the clouds before thee
  Melt, and the ruffian blasts take flight and fly;
The dædal lands, they know thee and adore thee,
  And clothe themselves with sweet flowers instantly;
Whilst pouring down its largest radiance o'er thee,
  In azure calm subsides the rounded sky,
To overarch thine advent; and for thee
A livelier sunlight laughs along the sea.

For lo, no sooner come the soft and glowing
  Days of the spring, and all the air is stirred
With amorous breaths of zephyr freshly blowing,
  Than the first prelude of thy power is heard
On all sides, in aerial music flowing
  Out of the bill of every pairing bird;
And every songster feels, on every tree,
Its small heart pulsing with the power of thee.

Next the herds feel thee; and the wild fleet races
  Bound o'er the fields, that smile in the bright weather,
And swim the streaming floods in fordless places,
  Led by thy chain, and captive in thy tether.
At last through seas and hills, thine influence passes,
  Through field and flood and all the world together,
And the birds' leafy homes; and thou dost fire
Each to renew his kind with sweet desire.

Wherefore, since thou, O lady, only thou
  Art she who guides the world upon its way;
Nor can aught rise without thee anyhow
  Up into the clear borders of the day,

Neither can aught without thee ever grow
Lovely and sweet—to thee, to thee I pray—
Aid and be near thy suppliant as he sings
Of nature and the secret ways of things."

For I have set myself, he goes on, to expound these as best I may to my dear friend, the son of the Memmii, in this very poem ; and for my affection to him, I would have every charm given to my verses. And do thou, my Memmius, so far as thou canst in these present troublous times, give an attentive ear to me, for I am going to explain to you the whole system of things ; and out of what first elements the world, and men, and gods have all alike arisen. I have a teacher—Epicurus—who has explained all these things to me ; and his teachings when first given to men made a new era in their history.

"When human life, a shame to human eyes,
Lay sprawling in the mire in foul estate,
A cowering thing without the strength to rise,
Held down by fell Religion's heavy weight—
Religion scowling downward from the skies,
With hideous head, and vigilant eyes of hate—
First did a man of Greece presume to raise
His brows, and give the monster gaze for gaze.

Him not the tales of all the gods in heaven,
Nor the heaven's lightnings, nor the menacing roar
Of thunder daunted. He was only driven,
By these vain vauntings, to desire the more
To burst through Nature's gates, and rive the unriven
Bars. And he gained the day ; and, conqueror,
His spirit broke beyond our world, and past
Its flaming walls, and fathomed all the vast.

And back returning, crowned with victory, he
Divulged of things the hidden mysteries,
Laying quite bare what can and cannot be,
How to each force is set strong boundaries,
How no power raves unchained, and nought is free.
So the times change ; and now religion lies
Trampled by us ; and unto us 'tis given
Fearless with level gaze to scan the heaven.

Yet fear I lest thou haply deem that thus
We sin, and enter wicked ways of reason.
Whereas 'gainst all things good and beauteous
'Tis oft religion does the foulest treason.
Has not the tale of Aulis come to us,
And those great chiefs who, in the windless season,
Bade young Iphianassa's form be laid
Upon the altar of the Trivian maid ?

Soon as the fillet round her virgin hair
Fell in its equal lengths down either cheek,—
Soon as she saw her father standing there,
Sad, by the altar, without power to speak,
And at his side the murderous minister,
Hiding the knife, and many a faithful Greek
Weeping—her knees grew weak, and with no sound
She sank, in speechless terror, on the ground.

But nought availed it in that hour accurst
To save the maid from such a doom as this,
That her lips were the baby lips that first
Called the king father with their cries and kiss.
For round her came the strong men, and none durst
Refuse to do what cruel part was his ;
So silently they raised her up, and bore her,
All quivering, to the deadly shrine before her.

And as they bore her, ne'er a golden lyre
Rang round her coming with a bridal strain;
But in the very season of desire,
A stainless maiden, amid bloody stain,
She died—a victim felled by its own sire—
That so the ships the wished-for wind might gain,
And air puff out their canvas. Learn thou, then,
To what damned deeds religion urges men."

Yes (Lucretius continues), and you too, Memmius, even you, will some time or other seek to fall away, and cower under the terrors of this false religion. And, indeed, what safeguard have you? How will you steel yourself against the terrors of the priests, who have ever a life to come with which to threaten you, and in which torments everlasting may, as they say, be yours? Did you know that death was death indeed, then you might keep a stout heart, and brave them. But now what do men know of the soul? They know neither its nature nor its origin—neither whence it came nor whither it is going. How shall they know, then, what may not be in store for it? What shall we do then? Our only hope is in this. Let us grasp first the principles of things; let us learn by what laws the stars and the sun move; how the earth was formed, and how all things live and grow upon it. And above all, let us find out by reason what the soul and mind consists of, and what are the laws of those things whence all our fears arise—imagination, and dreams, and madness.

Hard it is in Latin verses to expound the teachings of the Greeks. Our tongue is poor and wanting. No

one has used it yet to treat such themes as these. And yet for your sake, and the pleasure of your sweet friendship, I will not be daunted. I will essay to do my best.

This darkness, then, this terrible darkness, in which the human race is at present cowering, can be dispelled, not by any sunlight, nor the lucid darts of day, but by the aspect and the law of Nature—

> "For fear takes hold upon the human breast,
> When we see many things by Nature done,
> Whereof the ways and means are known to none."

And accordingly we ascribe these phenomena to the gods. One thing, therefore, at starting, I will tell you first—how that nothing can be produced from nothing. And when you are once made certain of that, you shall see clearly how all things can be produced and done without the hand of gods.

Lucretius then goes on, in the next two hundred verses, to explain that the elements of all things are atoms and void, supporting his theory by arguments that have been described already. Atoms and void are both alike eternal. All composite things may pass away, but these remain from everlasting. Nothing can be born from nothing; and nothing, when born, can go back to nothing:—

> "Things seem to die, but die not. The spring showers
> Die on the bosom of the motherly earth,
> But rise again in fruits and leaves and flowers,
> And every death is nothing but a birth."

Atoms, then, and empty space, he goes on—these, my friends, are all that really is. You can name nothing that is not a property of these, or else an accident:—

"That is a property which cannot be
Disjoined from a thing and separate
Without the said thing's death. Fluidity
Is thus a property of water; weight
Is of a stone. Whilst riches, poverty,
Slavery, freedom, concord, war and hate,
Which change, and not inhere in things of sense,
We name not properties, but accidents."

The Trojan war, for instance, was simply an accident of atoms and empty space; nor, but for these, would it ever have come to pass—

"For had things no material substance thus,
Nor void to move in, never had the fire
Out of the fairest child of Tyndarus
Lit in the Phrygian's breast the fell desire,
And put the torch to war; nor Pergamus
Had seen the dumb and lifeless steed draw nigh her,
Out of whose flanks the midnight warriors came,
Who ended all, and wrapt the towers in flame."

Remember then, I again tell you, that here are the two things that alone really are, infinite space and atoms—atoms indivisible, indestructible, that have endured, and that will endure for ever. Wherefore, they who held fire to be the one substance of things, and the sum to have been formed out of fire alone, are, of all philosophers, furthest from the truth. Chief of

this band is Heraclitus, a declarer of dark sentences, and a juggler with words.

"More famous he with babbling men and vain,
Amongst the Greeks, than those that strive to know
The truth indeed. For fools are always fain
To measure meanings by the gaudy show
Of twisted words that hide them. And a strain
That fills their ears with honeyed overflow
Of phrase and music, is at once decreed
Surely to hold the very truth indeed."

Lucretius then goes on to give the reasons why the theory of Heraclitus is untenable, and how it contradicts the very premises that he himself starts with. Nor any wiser are those who hold that things have four first beginnings, though some of those who have taught this, have been wise—wise above measure in other ways.

"Chief of these
Is he of Agrigent, Empedocles.

Him in its three-shored bounds that isle of yore
Reared, which the wild Ionian water laves,
Round curving bays and headlands, evermore
Splashing the brine up out of its green waves.
Here does the racing sea withhold the shore
Of Italy; and here Charybdis raves;
And here does rumbling Ætna moan and strain
For strength to lighten at the skies again.

Fair is that land, and all men hold it fair;
Its sons who guard its soil are fierce and free,
And all rich things, and gladsome things are there;
Yet nothing ever was there, nor shall be,

More glorious than this great philosopher—
More holy, marvellous, and dear than he:
Yea, and with such a strength his mighty line
Shouts through the earth—he seems a voice divine."

And yet, says Lucretius, in spite of all this, he has gone astray about the first beginnings of things, as did also Anaxagoras and all the rest, partly from their wrong conceptions of matter, partly because they denied the reality of empty space. And all these faults of theirs he points out in a way that we have already analysed.

And now mark (he goes on) what remains to be known, and hear it more distinctly. For my mind does not fail to perceive how dark these things are; but yet, despite all difficulties—

"Yet my heart smarting with desire for praise,
Me urges on to sing of themes like these,
And that great longing to pour forth my lays
Constrains me, and the loved Pierides,
Whose pathless mountain-haunts I now explore,
And glades where no man's foot has fallen before.

Ah sweet, ah sweet, to approach the untainted springs,
And quaff the virgin waters cool and clear,
And cull the flowers that have been unknown things
To all men heretofore! and yet more dear
When mine shall be the adventurous hand that brings
A crown for mine own brows, from places where
The Muse has deigned to grant a crown for none,
Save for my favoured brows, and mine alone."

Nor am I vain, Memmius, in such vaunts as these; for I am struggling to teach great things, and to release

the human mind from the fetters of religious fear; and dark as my subject is, my song is clear and lucid, and over the crabbed things I teach, I lay the Muses' charm.

And now thus far I have taught you how solid bodies of matter fly about ever unvanquished through all time. I have next another thing to teach you. I must show you there is no limit to the sum of these atoms, and likewise that there is no limit to the space they move in. As to space, I need but ask you, how can that be bounded? For whatever bounds it, that thing must itself be bounded likewise; and to this bounding thing there must be a bound again, and so on for ever and ever throughout all immensity. Suppose, however, for a moment, all existing space to be bounded, and that a man runs forward to the uttermost borders, and stands upon the last verge of things, and then hurls forward a winged javelin,—suppose you that the dart, when hurled by the vivid force, shall take its way to the point the darter aimed at, or that something will take its stand in the path of its flight, and arrest it? For one or other of these things must happen. There is a dilemma here that you never can escape from. Place your limit of things as far away as it shall please you, I will dog your steps till you have come to the utmost borders, and I will ask you what then becomes of your javelin. Surely you must see what the end of this must be:—

"The air bounds off the hills, the hills the air;
Earth bounds the ocean, ocean bounds the lands;
But the unbounded All is everywhere."

Lucretius here adds various other proofs of the infinity of empty space, and the infinite number of the atoms, all of which have been already stated. Such then, he exclaims, again reiterating his teaching—

"Such is the nature then of empty space,
The void above, beneath us, and around,
That not the thunderbolt with pauseless pace,
Hurtling for ever through the unplumbed profound
Of time, would find an ending to its race,
Or e'er grown nearer to the boundless bound.
So huge a room around, beneath, above,
Yawns, in which all things being, are and move."

The chance to which our world owes itself needed infinite atoms for its production, infinite trials, and infinite failures, before the present combination of things arose.

"For blindly, blindly, and without design,
Did these first atoms their first meetings try;
No ordering thought was there, no will divine
To guide them; but through infinite time gone by
Tossed and tormented they essayed to join,
And clashed through the void space tempestuously,
Until at last that certain whirl began,
Which slowly formed the earth and heaven and man."

And now my Memmius, Lucretius goes on, be far from trusting those that say all things press towards the centre, and that there are men beneath the earth, walking with their heads downwards. For the universe being infinite, how can there be any centre to it? And even grant that it had a centre, no heavy body could abide there; for everything that has weight must be for

ever and for ever falling, unless some rebound send it upwards.

Space, then, I have already proved to be infinite; and space being infinite, matter must be infinite also; lest, after the winged fashion of flame, the walls of the world break up suddenly, and fly along the mighty void, and the heavens fall upon the earth, and the earth break up from beneath the heaven, and the whole great universe in a single moment

> "Melt and be gone, and nothing take its place
> But viewless atoms and deserted space."

BOOK II.

The second book opens thus:—

"'Tis sweet when tempests roar upon the sea
To watch from land another's deep distress
Amongst the waves—his toil and misery:
Not that his sorrow makes our happiness,
But that some sweetness there must ever be
Watching what sorrows we do not possess:
So, too, 'tis sweet to safely view from far
Gleam o'er the plains the savage ways of war.

But sweeter far to look with purgèd eyes
Down from the battlements and topmost towers
Of learning, those high bastions of the wise,
And far below us see this world of ours,

The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies,
  Spending in pride and wrangling all their powers,
So far below—the pigmy toil and strife,
The pain and piteous rivalries of life.

O peoples miserable! O fools and blind!
  What night you cast o'er all the days of man
And in that night before you and behind
  What perils prowl! But you nor will nor can
See that the treasure of a tranquil mind
  Is all that Nature pleads for, for this span,
So that between our birth and grave we gain
Some quiet pleasures, and a pause from pain.

Wherefore we see that for the body's need
  A pause from pain almost itself suffices.
For only let our life from pain be freed,
  It oft itself with its own smile entices,
And fills our healthy hearts with joys indeed,
  That leave us small desire for art's devices.
Nor do we sigh for more in hours like these,
Rich in our wealth of sweet simplicities.

What though about the halls no silent band
  Of golden boys on many a pedestal
Dangle their hanging lamps from outstretched hand,
  To flare along the midnight festival—
Though on our board no priceless vessels stand,
  Nor gold nor silver fret the dazzling wall,
Nor does the soft voluptuous air resound
From gilded ceilings with the cithern's sound;

The grass is ours, and sweeter sounds than these,
  As down we couch us by the babbling spring,
And overhead we hear the branching trees
  That shade us, whisper; and for food we bring

Only the country's simple luxuries.
Ah, sweet is this, and sweetest in the spring,
When the sun goes through all the balmy hours,
And all the green earth's lap is filled with flowers!"

These, Memmius, these are this life's true enjoyments; not the seducing pleasures given by wealth and art. Will you get rid of a fever more quickly if you toss under a purple coverlet than under the blanket of a poor man? Just then as treasures, and high birth, and the pomp of kingly power, minister nothing to the body's health, push thy thought but a small step further, and you will see they minister nothing to the mind also: unless, indeed, you find that looking on the proud array of war, and the strength of obedient legions, your mind grows and swells with a haughtier strength also, and the scruples of religion are at once scared away from it, and the fears of death grow faint, as you realise your own power and greatness. But if we see that to talk like this is folly, and that the fear of death cares nothing for human arms and armies, but that it and all other sorrows stalk menacing and unabashed through courts and palaces, and flinch nothing at the glitter of gold and purple, how can you doubt but that reason alone can daunt them? For what is all this life of ours? It is a struggle in the dark, and in this dark men are as children. They quake and quiver at they know not what, and start aside at objects which in the daylight they would only laugh at. Light then, more light,—this is the thing we need for the liberation of man; but it is not outer light, it is the inner light of reason—

"Of reason searching Nature's secret way,
And not the sun, nor lucid darts of day."

And now mark, and I will explain to you the motions of the bodies of matter: how things are begotten and broken up again, and with what speed they go moving through the great void. For verily in movement all things about us are, perpetually wearing away, perpetually re-begotten. Some nations wax, others wane, and in a brief space the races of living things are changed, and, like runners, hand over the lamp of life.

Here Lucretius goes on to explain more in detail the everlasting motion of the atoms, the way they strike, the way they rebound, and the ways in which they become intertangled. They move, he says, as the motes move in a sunbeam, which you may see streaming through a dark chamber, and in the apparent void mingle in the light of the rays, and, as in never-ending conflict, skirmish and give battle, combating in troops and never halting, driven about in frequent meetings and partings, so that you may guess from this what it is for first beginnings of things to be for ever tossing about in the great void. So far as it goes, a small thing may give an illustration of a great thing, and put you on the track of knowledge.

Now how swiftly these atoms move, Memmius, you may learn from this:—

"When first the morning sprinkles earth with light,
And in the forest's lone heart everywhere
The birds awaken, and with fluttering flight
Pour out their flutings on the tender air;"

—at such a time we see how in a moment, in a single moment, the sun, far off though he be, darts his light through the whole creation, and clothes everything with his brightness. But the sun's rays have to travel through air, and the air retards their course; and therefore they move slowly when compared with the atoms, which move only through pure and empty space, and which hurry on and on, not held back by anything.

But some, ignorant of the nature of matter, say that without the providence of the gods the world could not have come to be what it has, nor the seasons vary in such nice conformity to the ways of men. Wanderers they from the true course of reason. For even if I did not know what first beginnings were, I could still maintain that the earth and heaven were never the work of any divine intelligence,—so great are the defects with which they stand encumbered. All which, Memmius, I will by-and-by make clear to you; but we will now go on to explain what is yet to be told of motions.

Lucretius now goes on to deal with the primary downward tendency of atoms, and to account for the upward courses they take, through blows and reboundings, and being squeezed upwards out of solidifying substances. Next he explains that uncertain sideways movement, which is the one respect in which the uniformity of atomic movement is broken, and which he here proclaims to be the origin, and the only possible origin, of the free-will of living beings.

Then he goes on to explain that the laws of matter have been the same for ever; that it is the nature of

matter to be for ever moving; and that though things seem to be now at rest, their atoms are still as unresting as they were at the beginning. Nor need you wonder at this, he says; for when mighty legions fill in their courses all the places of the plains, in the mimicry of war, the glitter of them lifts itself up to the sky, and the whole earth about glitters with brass, and a noise is made beneath by the trampling of the mighty ones, and the mountains smitten by the shouting hurl the voices upward to the stars of heaven, and all the wheeling horsemen scour the plains, and make them tremble with the charge:—

> "Yet some place is there in the far-off hills
> Whence all this storm of chargers seems to rest,
> A still light brooding on the broad plain's breast."

Lucretius now goes on to show that the atoms must be of various shapes, the kinds of things produced by them are so different,—fluids, solids, and airs, tastes and smells. Were not the seeds of different shapes, and each special substance made of special seeds, how could the species of animals remain alike, and never vary? or how could parent transmit to child that special something by which the two mutually recognise each other? For this we see that even the beasts can do; and they are just as well known to each other as human beings are.

> "Thus oft before our pillared sanctuaries,
> When the lit altars lift their fragrant blaze,
> A calf pours forth its warm life's blood, and dies;
> But she, the mother, in her lone amaze

Goes through the fields, and still can recognise
Her own one's cloven footfalls in the ways,
And looks to find it, and her eyes grow wild
With wondering for her unreturning child.

Then from her mouth breaks forth the desolate moan
Through all the leafy groves, and she gives o'er
Her search, only she oft goes back alone
To that bleak stall her child shall know no more;
Nor tender willows, nor lush grasses grown
Sweet with the dew-fall, nor clear streams that pour
With brimming lips their waves along the plain,
Can tempt her mouth, nor ease her breast of pain."

Remember then, says Lucretius, that the atoms have various shapes; but the number of such shapes is finite, though of atoms of each shape the number must be infinite: for since the difference of shape is finite, those which are like are infinite, or the sum of matter will be finite. All this he draws out at length, urging all the arguments that have been described already.

And thus, he says, out of infinite matter, and through infinite space, things as they are continue, for ever being destroyed and for ever again renewed; nor can death-dealing motions keep the mastery always, nor entomb existence for evermore, nor, on the other hand, can the birth and increase-giving motions of things preserve them always after they are born.

"Thus from the depths of all eternity
The unwearying atoms wage a dubious war;
And now with surging life doth victory lie,
And now anon is death the conqueror;

And with the funeral wail, the baby's cry
Blends, as it opes its eyes on daylight's shore:
Nor ever morning broke that failed to hear
The infant's bleatings and the mourner's tear."

And herein, Memmius, it is most fit you should remember that there is nothing that is known by sense that consists of one kind of seed; all is formed by a mixture of divers atoms. And when a thing has many properties, you must know it is a compound of seeds of many shapes. Such a compound is the great earth we live on, for her properties, as we can all see, are many. For she brings forth fires, and the great seas, and crops, and joyous trees, and the bodies of living things. Wherefore, of gods, and men, and beasts, she alone has been named the mother. Of her the Greek poets sang, that, borne on her towering chariot, she comes driving a yoke of lions. They have yoked to her car the beasts, to show that nature, however savage, should be softened by the care of parents. They have crowned her head with a mural crown, because, fortified in strong positions, she sustains cities. Phrygian bands escort her, for in Phrygia the story is that the first corn grew; and Galli, too, are her guardians, to show that they who have done violence to the divinity of the mother, are unworthy to bring a living offspring to the daylight.

"The tight-stretched timbrels thunder round her way,
The sounding cymbals clash, and cry Prepare!
The threatening horns with hoarser music bray,
And hollow pipes are loud upon the air;

And swords are borne before her, sharp to slay—
Emblems of rage to thankless souls that dare
Neglect the Queen ; till holy fear has birth
Of the great Mother over all the earth.

Therefore when first she slowly comes progressing
Through mighty cities, and with soundless tongue
Breathes over men the dumb unworded blessing,
Down in her path are brass and silver flung,
A bounteous largess, mortal thanks expressing;
And flowers are showered by all the adoring throng,
Till on the Mother and her train there falls
A snowstorm of soft-settling rose-petals."

But all this escort and progress are only symbolism. It is beautifully told and well set forth, but it is very far removed from true reason. For the nature of the gods must enjoy supreme repose, and know neither care nor labour; for no pain mars it, nor can aught we do appease it or make it angry. And if any one choose to call the sea Neptune, and corn Ceres, and would rather use the word Bacchus than the word wine, let us suffer him to say in this sense that the earth is mother of gods, if he only forbears in earnest to sully his soul with the stain of foul religion.

"For all this while the earth is blind and dumb,
It neither knows, nor thinks, nor hears, nor feels,
But blindly in it various seeds unite,
And blindly these break forth, and reach the light."

But though all things, Lucretius goes on, are composed of many seeds, it is evident that these combinations follow some laws, and only certain set combinations are possible by the nature of things. The

uniformity of nature shows us this; and you may learn it, too, from considering what the atoms are themselves. You must know, too, that first beginnings have themselves no sensible qualities. In especial, you must remember that they are without colour. Lucretius gives many reasons for this,—more particularly, that colour cannot exist without light, and that it varies according to what way the light falls upon it.

"After this fashion does the ringdove's down
Change in the sun, and shift its plumy sheen;
Now all a poppy's dark vermilion,
Now coral, glimmering over emerald green.
So too the peacock, saturate with sun
O'er all its sweep of trailing tail, is seen
To quiver in the light with varying dyes,
And all the hues inconstant in its eyes."

And now Lucretius goes on with his reasons why atoms cannot have either voice, or smell, or sense, or any sensible qualities whatsoever. Life has arisen out of the lifeless, as we see even now worms arising out of clods, though in the case of the higher animals the lifeless matter has to go through many stages; and only through special combinations of circumstances can it at last break forth into life and consciousness. But if any one shall say that sense may be so far begotten out of no-sensation, by a process of change, or by a kind of birth, all we have to show to such a man is, that this change and birth can only happen in obedience to fixed laws, and under fixed conditions. Above all, the senses cannot exist in any body, till the living nature of that body has been begotten; for till then,

the atoms that will make up the principles of life and feeling are wandering far and wide—in air and earth, in flowers and trees and rivers. Common-sense will tell you that all this must be so. For did the atoms live, what then? Think of the picture you would have to form of them.

"Sure, had they life, these seeds of things, why then
Each separate particle would laugh and cry
By its small self, and speculate like men—
'What were my own first seeds, and whence am I?'"

Wherefore be assured, Memmius, that we have all arisen out of lifeless things—

"And learn
That what of us was taken from the dust
Will surely one day to the dust return;
And what the air has lent us, heaven will bear
Away, and render back its own to air."

For death is not an extinction of matter,—it is a change and a dissolution only. The atoms are like the letters of an alphabet, for ever shifting their places, and clustering into new words, and these words again clustering into new verses.

And now, we entreat you, apply your mind to reason. For a new matter struggles earnestly to gain your ears; and remember this, that the simplest thing, if new, is at first hard to be realised; and the hardest thing grows easy when we have known it long enough

"Lift up your eyes, consider the blue sky,
And all the multitudes of wandering signs
It holds within its hollows; mark on high
How shines the sun, and how the clear moon shines.

Supposing this great vision suddenly
Broke on the gaze of man, my soul divines
That to the astonied nations it would seem
A mist, a fancy, a desire, a dream."

And yet how little, it is so familiar, do we now heed it! Wonder not, therefore, if I lead your spirit on a farther and a more adventurous voyage, and carry you past the walls of heaven and the bounding blue, and show you what is there, far yonder, in the bottomless unplumbed depths, to which the spirit ever yearns to look forward, and to which the mind's inner self reaches in free and unhindered flight. There then, in the space beyond, where the atoms are for ever flying, are other worlds than ours, woven as ours was out of flying atoms, and the blind clash of them. Our universe is but one out of a countless number. As a man is but one amongst many men, so is our universe but one amongst many universes. And through all these runs a single law. They have risen in the same way, they are sustained in the same way; and in the same way, and by a like necessity, they will all one day perish. Do but realise this, and the whole scheme of things will grow clearer to you, and you will see how—

"Rid of her haughty masters, straight with ease
Does nature work, and willingly sustains
Her frame, and asks no aid of deities.
For of those holy gods who haunt the plains
Of Ether, and for aye abide in peace,
I ask, could such as they are hold the reins
Of all the worlds, or in their courses keep
The forces of the immeasurable deep?

Whose are the hands could make the stars to roll
Through all their courses, and the fruitful clod
Foster the while with sunlight, always whole,
A multiplied but undivided god;
And strike with bellowing thunders from the pole,
Now his own temples, now the unbending sod;
And now in deserts those vain lightnings try
That strike the pure, and pass the guilty by?"

And this too, Memmius, you must know as well. Each of these countless universes has grown from small to greater, and the bulk of them has been added to by seeds dropped down upon them out of the boundless space; and, in like manner, they are diminished and divided, for their seeds get loose, and the boundless space receives them back again. And as plants and animals are born, increase in stature and in strength, and then wax old and die, so is it with the worlds also. And this world of ours, as many a sign shows us, is now well stricken in years, and the time of its dissolution is drawing nigh. With each return of its seasons its strength gets more feeble. Once goodly crops and grasses sprang from the teeming soil without labour. Now, labour as we will, but a scant reward is yielded. And now the aged ploughman shakes his head, and sighs to think of the earth's exuberance in the days when he was young. And the sorrowful planter complains of his shrivelled vines, and wearies heaven with his prayers, and comprehends not that all things are gradually wasting away, and passing to the grave, quite worn out by age and length of days.

BOOK III.

Lucretius opens this book with an invocation to Epicurus, his revered master:—

"Thou who wert first in drowning depths of night
To lift aloft so clear a lamp, whose rays
Strike along life, and put the shades to flight—
Thee, thee, chief glory of the Grecian race,
I strive to follow, humbly and aright,
And my feet in thy very footprints place;
Not that thy rival I would dare to be,
But that I love, and loving follow thee.

Thy rival! Nay; can swallows rival swans?
Or thunder-footed steeds competitors
Find 'mongst the she-goat's gamb'ling little ones?
Oh, first and best of all discoverers,
We are but bees along the flowery lawns,
Who rifle for our food thy fields of verse,
And on thy golden maxims pause and prey—
All-gold, and worthy to endure for aye.

For lo! no sooner does thy powerful line
Loud through the world the scheme of Nature sing,
Than the mind hears, and at that note of thine
Its flocks of phantom terrors take to wing.
The world's walls roll apart, and I divine
With opened eyes the ways of everything,
And how through Nature's void immensity
Things were not, were, and are, and cease to be.

And lo! the gods appear, the immortal races,
Visible in the lucent windless air
That fills their quiet blest abiding-places,
Which never noisy storm nor storm-clouds dare

To trouble, where the frost's tooth leaves no traces,
And downwards no white falling snowflakes fare,
But on their lips the laughters never cease,
Nor want nor pain invades their ageless peace.

But on the other hand we search in vain,
For those swart forms, the fearful deities
Of Hell. Our vision roams the whole inane,
But aught like Acheron it nowhere sees.
And I, when I to this high view attain,
Feel on my soul a maddening rapture seize,
And next a trembling, that thy hand should dare
Thus to the quick to lay all Nature bare."

And now, says Lucretius, since I have shown what atoms are, their number, their shape, and their motions, and how all things can be produced out of them, I will next reveal the nature of the mind and soul, that the dream of Acheron may be once and for all dispelled, which at present troubles life to its inmost depth, casts a chill and deathly shade over our whole existence, and leaves a taint and a bitterness in every pleasure. True it is that we often hear men vaunt that they have no fear of death, and that the ills and hardships of life are all they really flinch from. But these are merely boasters. Bring them into any trouble or danger, and you will see how they betake themselves to their knees, whining to their gods, and forgetful of all their bravery. Such fearless firmness as these men feign to have, can be given only by knowledge and calm reason. Listen to me, then, and I will lead you to it:—

"First, then, I say the mind, which often we
Call also understanding, wherein dwells

The power that rules our whole vitality,
  Is part of man, as is whatever else
Goes to make up his frame, as hands, feet, knees;
  Nor is it, as a foolish Greek school tells,
A harmony of all the members, spread
As health is, everywhere from feet to head."

But it resides in one particular place, just as sight, hearing, and smell do. Lucretius here goes on in detail to explain the nature of the mind, how it is connected with the vital soul, and how the two are connected with the body, how they govern it and are contained by it, how the former is seated in the heart, and how the latter pervades the whole frame. He then describes how the mind touches the soul and moves it, and how the soul in its turn touches the body; and from this he argues that they must of necessity be corporeal, for where there is no corporeality, there is no touch. With first beginnings, then, he says, interlaced from their earliest birth, are mind and body fashioned, and gifted with a life of joint partnership; and it is plain that the faculty of the body and of the mind cannot feel separately, each alone without the power of the other, but sense is kindled throughout our flesh and blown into a flame between the two, by joint motions on the part of both.

And now (he goes on) I will show you that mind and soul are mortal; and in what I have now to say, remember that I still use the words mind and soul indifferently, and that what I say of the one will apply in the same way to the other, since both make up one thing, and are one single substance. First of all,

then, remember of how fine a substance I have shown the soul to be, and how far more sensitive than any other thing,—

"More than a drifting smoke, or ductile river;
For even shapes of mists and smoke in dreams,
Soon as they touch the mind will make it quiver,
As when in sleep the votive altar steams
Before our sight; for even dreams like these
Come from the touch of films and images."

Well, then, since you see that water is scattered when the vessel that held it is broken, and the mists melt away into the air, how can you doubt that the soul will one day do likewise when its body goes to pieces? Again, we see that the mind is born with the body, grows strong with the body, and also with the body once more grows frail and feeble:—

"It follows then that when this life is past,
It goes an outcast from the body's door,
And dies like smoke along the driving blast.
We with the flesh beheld it born and rise
To strength; and with the flesh it fades and dies."

And now consider this too. The body is subject to many diseases, and with many of these the soul is affected also. Often the reason wanders, often the reason is for a time quite slain. Such loss of reason comes from the powers of the mind and soul being dissevered, and riven and forced asunder by the same baneful malady as the body is. What shall we think then?—

"Even in the body thus the soul is troubled,
And scarce can hold its fluttering frame together;
How should it live then, when, with force redoubled,
Naked it feels the air and angry weather?"

Again, Lucretius goes on (after having added a number of other arguments which have been already given in a former chapter), seeds of the soul are evidently left in the body after death, because worms and living things are bred out of it. And a soul that can be thus divided cannot be immortal. For it is impossible to think that each of these worms has an immortal soul of its own, that immediately at the birth of its body makes its way into it, and that thus many thousands of souls meet together in a place from which one has been withdrawn, and either find bodies ready made for them, or set each about making a body for itself. This is glaringly absurd:—

"For why should souls, if they can cast away
Their mortal carcasses, and still live on,
Thus toil to build themselves a den of clay?
Since when with bodies they are clothed upon
They straight grow heirs to sickness and decay,
And through them all the body's grief has gone.
Nor for themselves could souls contrive to build
Such prison-pens, how much soe'er they willed."

Lucretius here brings forward several other arguments, and then he once more thus returns to this one:—

"Again, when creatures' bodies are preparing,
Sure we should laugh to see the souls stand by—
Bands of immortals at each other glaring
About that mortal house in rivalry,

Each longing he may be the first to fare in,
And each braced up to push his best and try.
Unless they settle it on this condition,
That who comes first shall have the first admission."

Again, if more arguments are still needed, for everything there is a fixed place appointed; nor do fishes live in the land, trees in the clouds, nor the sap of trees in stones. And thus the nature of mind cannot come into being without the body, nor exist away from it. And therefore, when the body has died, we must admit that the soul is perished. Every argument points to this conclusion. We cannot doubt it; we cannot escape from it. Analogy, observation, and common-sense, all point the same way, and confirm us in a complete certitude:—

"Death is for us then but a noise and name,
Since the mind dies, and hurts us not a jot;
And as in bygone times when Carthage came
To battle, we and ours were troubled not,
Nor heeded though the whole earth's shuddering frame
Reeled with the stamp of armies, and the lot
Of things was doubtful, to which lords should fall
The land and seas and all the rule of all;

So, too, when we and ours shall be no more,
And there has come the eternal separation
Of flesh and spirit, which, conjoined before,
Made us ourselves, there will be no sensation;
We should not hear were all the world at war;
Nor shall we, in its last dilapidation,
When the heavens fall, and earth's foundations flee.
We shall nor feel, nor hear, nor know, nor see."

And even—if for a moment we may imagine the impossible—even should the soul still survive the body, what is that to us? For we are neither soul nor body, but we are a single being fashioned out of the wedlock of the two. Nor, again, if time should gather up our matter after death, and again remould it into the very beings we now are, that is nothing to us, when once the chain of our consciousness has been snapped asunder. Perhaps we may have existed before: that gives us no sorrow. Suppose we can exist again: this need give us no more trouble than that.

Therefore, when you see a man bemoaning his hard case, that after death his body will either rot in the grave, or be consumed by fire, or be torn by wild beasts, the sound his mouth gives forth betrays a flaw somewhere. He does not really grant the conclusion he professes to grant. He has not with his whole mind realised that he will wholly die. The inveterate fancy still clings to him that there will still be a surviving something, that living will lament about its own death:—

"Perplexed he argues, from the fallacy
Of that surviving self not wholly freed.
Hence he bewails his bitter doom—to die;
Nor does he see that when he dies indeed,
No second he will still remain to cry,
Watching its own cold body burn or bleed.
O fool! to fear the wild-beast's ravening claw,
Or that torn burial of its mouth and maw.

For lo! if this be fearful, let me learn
Is it more fearful than if friends should place

Thy decent limbs upon the pyre and burn
  Sweet frankincense? or smother up thy face
With honey in the balm-containing urn?
  Or if you merely lay beneath the rays
Of heaven on some cold rock? or damp and cold
If on thine eyelids lay a load of mould?

'Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,
  Nor thy dear wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
  And through thy heart make quiet comfort go:
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store
  Thou hoardedst for thine own,' men say, 'and lo,
All thou desired is gone!' but never say,
'All the desire as well hath passed away.'

Ah! could they only see this, and could borrow
  True words, to tell what things in death abide thee!
'Thou shalt lie soothed in sleep that knows no
      morrow,
  Nor ever cark nor care again betide thee:
Friend, thou wilt say thy long good-bye to sorrow,
  And ours will be the pangs, who weep beside thee,
And watch thy dear familiar body burn,
And leave us but the ashes and the urn.'"

Often, too, at feasts men say, as they drink, and wreathe their garlands round them, "Miserable creatures that we are! our joys are short; they will soon be part and parcel of the past, and the past never gives its own back again." As if after death they would ever know thirst, and be pining for the wine-cup that will never more be allowed them!

Once more, could Nature only speak to us, how would she deride us foolish mortals and reprove us!

"Fools," she would say, "and sickly sorrowers! why bemoan and wail for death in this wise? For say thy past life has been welcome to thee, and all its joys have not been given in vain, passing through thee like a leaky vessel that refuses to be filled—say thou hast had thy will and thy fill of living:—

> "Why not rise up then, like a sated guest,
> And enter, fool, upon thy dreamless rest?"

But if, on the contrary, life has been a sorrow to thee, and all the blessings that have been thine thou hast squandered, why seek to re-begin the weary round, and to gather what again thou wilt waste and squander as before? For hope not to find anything new. There is no other pleasure that I can contrive or discover for thee.

> "For though thy life be fresh within thy frame,
> Nor years have yet thy bodily strength abated,
> You would find all things alway still the same,
> Nor e'er discover one thing new created—
> Not shouldst thou live till all men's lives be done,
> For there is no new thing beneath the sun."

Think, too, of the bygone antiquity of the everlasting time before our birth, how that was nothing to us. For nature holds up to us the time that was before us, as a vision of the future time that is to come after us.

> "Look in the glass then. Say what shape is there?
> Appears there aught of terrible or sad?
> Does not the image that you gaze at seem
> Even gentler than a sleep without a dream."

Sure enough, however, the terrors men dread after death are not all vain imaginings. Birds truly eat a way into Tityos; Sisyphus rolls his stone up-hill for ever. But he is a Tityos, who, as he grovels in lust, is eaten up by anguish like a vulture; and he is a Sisyphus who is for ever asking honours of the people, and is for ever going back disappointed. The torments that we dreamed of in the future have their real being here, and men inflict them on themselves, in this very life around us.

Ah! might men only see the real cause of their sorrows, how salvation would then dawn on them! The man who is sick of home hurries forth from his lordly porticos, and then, again, hurries back, finding he is no better off abroad. In the town he says, Ah, would I were in the country! and in the country, Ah, would I were in the town! and to and fro between the two he goes hurrying in his chariot, and at each end of his journey he can do nothing but yawn for weariness. In this way each man flies from himself, but can never for a moment escape; and he hates himself, being sick with an unknown malady. But could he only see the matter rightly, leaving all else, he would study the nature of things; and learning that certain extinction and death is the end of all, would learn so to order his life accordingly.

BOOK IV.

And now, says Lucretius, since I have shown you what mind and soul is, and how life is born with this body, and dies with the body's death, I will go on to explain to you a matter of the utmost moment; I will show you how we see, and feel, and taste, and how our life is connected with and knows the external world. And hard though the subject be, I will make it sweet to you, overlaying all its bitterness with the sweet honey of the Muses.

He now goes on to explain how films and images are perpetually streaming off the surface of things, and illustrates this by many analogies. For without doubt, he says, we see many things freely giving such discharge, not from the centre only, but from the outer surface itself.

"This daily happens, when the sunlight gleams
Through those broad awnings, yellow, red, and blue,
Which flap and flutter on their poles and beams
Over great theatres: for there you view
How from their surface down their colour streams,
And how they make to flicker with their hue
The curving crowd, and all the scene's recesses,
And the grave fathers in their stately dresses.

And all the more the narrowing walls around
Make of the theatre a well of night,
So much more gaily do the colours bound,
And every object laughs with wayward light."

And therefore, he says, since sheets of canvas dis-

charge colour from their surface, all things will naturally discharge their pictures too—since, in each case alike they are sent forth from the surface. Nor are you to suppose that only those images are going through the air, which are thus sent off the surface of things. There are other images, with no counterparts, which spontaneously beget and fashion themselves, as clouds do, and wander along as clouds do, with ever-varying and inconstant shape. For the clouds in this way we can see continually

"Fanning the air, and, gathering form on high,
Blot out the blue, and violate the sky;

Then through the air in shifting shapes are born:
Now see we monstrous giants hurrying past,
Who trail behind them lengths of shade forlorn;
And now great mountains move along the blast,
And crags and boulders from the mountains torn,
By which the sun's dimmed face is overcast;
And now some mighty beast comes on amain
With packs of other storm-clouds in its train."

And now I will go on to show with what ease and celerity the images or idols that I spoke of are begotten, and how incessantly they flow and fall away from things. Hereupon he explains more minutely the nature of these emanations, how fine their substance is, and consequently with what swiftness they are capable of moving:—

"For we observe that things of little weight
Are ever swift to move, of the which kind
The sunlight is, which does not hesitate,

Ever pressed on by fresh light from behind,
To force its way, and nimbly penetrate
Through all the space of air."

And these idols or images of things are in their movements as swift as sunlight, and can pass through air as readily,—nay, they must be even swifter; for the stars are farther from us than the sun, and yet

"No sooner is the shine of water spread
In the night air, beneath heaven's glittering plain,
Than instantly to every star o'erhead
A star within the wave responds again."

Therefore, again and again, I repeat, you must admit that bodies, capable of striking the eyes and provoking vision, are constantly travelling through the air with a marvellous velocity. But because we can see with the eyes alone, the consequence is, that to whatever point we turn our sight, then all the same things meet and strike us with their shape and colour. Lucretius now goes on to explain the manner in which we infer the distance of things, and then the action of mirrors, and the real nature of the reflection in them. He then passes to optical delusions, and the various ways in which it seems that our eyes deceive us:—

"Now for this cause the far towers of a town
Reach us as round, when they indeed are square;
The angles of their films are quite worn down
In drifting towards us through the length of air;
And when they meet us, those strong things of stone
Seem smooth and circular, as though they were
Turned in a lathe; but vaguely thus appear,
And like a shadowy sketch of round things near."

And there are numberless other like cases as well, but they can be all explained satisfactorily, and we must never for a moment admit that our eyes deceive us. The frailty, the sense of deception, is really in the mind. Do but think of the following instances, and you will see that this is so :—

"The ship in which we sail seems standing still,
The ship that rides at anchor drifting by;
And, as we hold to seaward, field and hill
Seem to drop far astern; and in the sky
The stars we steer by seem immovable,
And yet go moving on assiduously,
Since each clear body has its hour to rise,
And its long road to rest across the skies.

And as we watch the sun and moon, their light
Seems also fixed, yet still moves on we know:
And when on deck we watch with straining sight,
Up from the sea-line shadowy mountains go,
Into one solid isle their shapes unite,
And yet we know huge straits between them flow,
And ways for fleets. And giddy children view,
When they stop turning, all things turning too.'

So, too, the sun seems near us when it rises, and yet illimitable lands and seas and unknown people lie between. A puddle of not a finger's depth seems to contain the whole great heaven. As we pause on horseback in a river-ford, the river seems to be standing still, and ourselves to be carried violently up the stream. A portico is supported on equal pillars, and yet as we look through it their height seems to be dwindling, and the floor seems to be rising, till they

meet in a vanishing-point. Oars we know to be straight; and yet dip them in the water, and their submerged part will seem to be bent and broken:—

"So, too, we seem when chained in sleep profound
To move in daylight, footing field and hill,
Sailing new seas, and treading alien ground;
And when the earnest night is deep and still,
Our ears are loud with many a fancied sound."

And many other marvellous things are there, which would seek to shake the credit of the senses: but in vain; for it is not the senses that deceive us, but we who deceive ourselves, by wrongly interpreting what they rightly tell us. Again—

"If a man hold that nothing can be known,
He knows not whether he can know this even,
Since he admits the things he knows are none.
He stands with head on earth, and feet in heaven,
And I decline to talk with such an one."

No—such scepticism as this is utterly suicidal. The senses are all we can take our stand on, and they are unerring guides.

And now, says Lucretius, I will explain the action of the other senses. Sounds, in the first place, are streams of atoms, whose shape varies with the quality of the sound:—

"Nor are the first beginnings of like form
Which pierce the ears in crabbed sounds and sweet,
As when in air the braying trumpets storm
Which rouse barbarian nations to their feet,
And when its carol comes from the wild swan
Over the headlong floods of Helicon."

When we speak, we force our voices out of the depth of our bodies, and the tongue gives their shape to them just as they are leaving our lips. Words travel a certain distance keeping their clear shape; gradually this becomes obliterated. No sooner is a voice uttered, than it starts asunder into many voices; and this is the way in which a whole assembly hears the words of a single speaker. Voices which do not strike directly on the ear are carried away and lost, or else striking on something solid are thrown back again:—

"Which knowing, you may to yourself explain,
And to your friends the explanation tell,
How it is that the rocks give back again
Our syllables in many a lonely dell;
And how, when in the dusk we call in vain
For our strayed friends, the hills grow voluble,
And their familiar names are tossed about
From slope to slope in many a lipless shout.

I have seen places where to one such call,
Straight six or seven voices would reply,
In such a wise did every rocky wall
One to the other make our utterance fly;
And then the others, likewise, one and all
Would toss them back in answer presently.
In spots like these, the village people tell
That the shy nymphs and goat-foot satyrs dwell.

And there, too, say they, lurk the haunting fauns,
Who make strange noises through the night profound,
Playing quaint pranks amongst the shadowy lawns,
With twangling lyres, and pipes of plaintive sound.

Also, they hear god Pan, when spring-time dawns,
  Come, that wild head of his with pine-boughs bound,
To touch the reeds with crooked mouth, and fling
Their song of sylvan music to the spring.

Now, to proceed, you need not wonder how
  It is that voices come and beat the ears
Through things through which the eyesight cannot go.
  Because of this the reason plain appears—
Full many a thing that lets the voice go through,
  The visual film to thousand pieces tears
'Tis of so fine a texture."

Lucretius now proceeds to give that account of the remaining senses, of dreams, of the imagination, and of the way in which external things act as a stimulus to the mind, and the mind again acts as a stimulus to the body, which has been already explained at length. He then goes on to describe the nature of love, which he treats of simply as a form of physical excitement. This pleasure, he says, is for us Venus; from that desire is the Latin name of love—from that desire has first trickled into the heart yon drop of Venus's honeyed joy, destined to be followed soon by chilly care. For though that which you yearn for is away, yet images of it are at hand, and its sweet name is present to the ears. But it is meet to fly such images, and scare away all that feeds love, and not keep your thoughts set upon one object, and so lay up for yourself care and unfailing pain. For the sore gathers strength, and becomes inveterate by feeding. For love, says Lucretius, is a fierce madness, a hungry longing, that will never be satiated, and will always

leave you craving. For its sake young men waste their strength and ruin themselves, and their whole life is passed at the beck of another:—

"Meanwhile their substance wastes and runs away,
Turned into coverlets from Babylon;
Their duties are neglected day by day,
And all their noble name is quite undone.
Meanwhile upon her brow green emeralds play,
Glancing in gold, and shoes from Sicyon
Deck her elastic feet; and tears and traces
Are on her crumpled robe of love's embraces.

And all the wealth their good sires toiled to gain
Changes to head-gear, and rich anadem,
And Cean robes with trailing sweep of train,
And feasts, and goblets thick with many a gem,
And unguents, games, and garlands. All in vain!
They have their canker in the heart of them.
A bitter something, in the midmost hours
Of joy, starts up, and stings amongst the flowers.

Either because they burn to see how they
In foul embraces and effeminate
Slay their own selves, and waste their strength away;
Or else the dainty lips, on whom their fate
Hangs, some slight word of doubtful meaning say,
Which stings their heart like fire; or soon or late
They think her eyes are roaming, to beguile
Others, and catch the footprints of a smile."

And these evils are the evils of love when it is successful. How much greater are those of love that is crossed and hopeless! So that it is best to watch beforehand, that you be never entangled in the snare.

And yet even when you are entangled you may escape, unless you stand in your own way, and refuse resolutely to observe all those vices of mind and body which you may be quite sure will abound in her, woo whom you will. For this is what men do for the most part, blinded by passion, and attribute to their loved ones beauties that are not really theirs.

"Muddy complexions have a dusky spell,
A lover says. A slut's a natural creature,
A romping hoyden seems a slim gazelle;
A sharp-tongued spitfire dazzles like a meteor.
See, in yon slow and cumbrous movements dwell
A queenly pride; that face, without a feature,
Is strangely touching; and this fat plump chit
Is, top to toe, the very soul of wit."

Lucretius goes on, something in the temper of Pope, to describe how different is

"Cynthia at her toilet's greasy task,
To Cynthia fragrant at an evening masque."

And draws a humorous contrast between the scene at the toilet indoors, when the lady is putting the last delicate stroke to her charms, with her maid behind her tittering at the whole process, and the lover outside at the threshold full of yearning for the adored one, and thinking sacred for her sake the very house that holds her.

And yet, says Lucretius in conclusion, it is not all love that is thus vain and deluding: some women have a genuine passion for their lovers or their husbands; and often a wife, though of but small beauty,

will by her gentle manners win the heart of a man, and custom will habituate him to pass his life with her, and love will set its mark on his heart at last, as dripping water will at last make a hole in a stone.

BOOK V.

Here again the book opens with the praises of Epicurus :—

"Where is the bard whose verse avails to tell
Of themes like these—of Nature's ways sublime?
Or who shall so the power of verse compel
As fitly to resound his praise in rhyme,
Who all those spoils, that to his own hand fell,
Hath left us as an heirloom for all time,
Making us wise for ever? Truly none,
Unless indeed it be a god alone.

For Memmius, if 'tis pleasing in thine eyes
To speak the plain unvarnished truth of things,
The author of these great discoveries—
He was a god of gods, a king of kings.
For first through him men grew what men call wise,
And from him every rule of prudence springs,
Who towed our life out of the storms and night,
And moored us in the tranquil calm and light."

What, compared to his discoveries, are those of other discoverers? Ceres, it is said, gave corn to us, and Bacchus wine. But we could have lived on happily

without either of these, and many a nation does so even now. But unless the breast is clear, no life can be happy; and hence he, Epicurus our mighty master, is rightly held a god by us, since from him come those sweet mental solaces which are even now spreading in the world, and soothing the hearts of men.

"Yea, and our master therefore did far more
Than vaunted Hercules. For how should we
Fear the Nemean lion's rage and roar,
Or that great bull in Crete beyond the sea,
Or all the bristles of the Arcadian boar,
Or what to us could snaky hydras be?
Or how would Gorgon fight us from his gloom,
Or those Stymphalian birds with brazen plume?

Or that great dragon which for ever keeps
The shining fruitage of the Hesperides,
With fierce and vigilant eye that never sleeps,
Couched 'neath the shadow of the charmed trees,
Whilst round the midmost stem his huge coil creeps—
How should he harm us by his far-off seas,
The Atlantic shore, and the abhorred waves
Which even the wild barbarian never braves?"

And all the other monsters of like kind that have been conquered, what harm, I ask, could they do us were they even now living? None, methinks — neither these, nor the like of these. But unless the breast is cleared, it itself is full of monsters; rather let us be afraid of them, and honour and glorify him who put them first to rout.

Wherefore, walking in his footsteps, I will tell you in order how the world arose, and what laws it obeyed

in rising. I will show you that it had a birth, and that death is also in store for it. I will tell you how the heaven is formed, and the earth also, the moon and stars, and how living creatures emerged out of lifeless matter; and I will show you how all things are held and fettered by immutable laws and boundaries:—

"Well, not to dally more with things unproven,
Look round you, on the heaven, the earth, the sea,
The triple thread of which the world is woven,
Three bodies, Memmius, such a different three.
A day shall come when these shall all be cloven,
And all the things that are shall cease to be,
And blown like dust upon a stormy wind,
The whole world melt, nor leave a wrack behind."

If you doubt how this can be, consider the power of earthquakes, and how in a few moments all things near are shattered by them:—

"But these may fortune banish from our path,
Nor with such signs see fit to assure our faith."

But before I go on to sing you the sure oracle, the doom and the destruction that await this whole universe, I will again pause a moment and sustain your trembling mind, lest religion should still make you think that the world will endure for ever, and that all who should seek to prove otherwise shall suffer punishment, like a fresh race of Titans labouring to undermine the world. For what life or sense is there in the sea, the sun, the moon, that they should heed or hear what men say about them? How can they possibly have any life or passions in them? For we have seen

what life is. It cannot exist without a fleshly body; and even in that body it can live only in a certain part.

Then, too, you cannot possibly believe that the gods exist in any parts of the world. Their fine nature is far withdrawn from our senses; the mind itself hardly sees them. We cannot touch them; and how then, I ask you, shall they touch us? What folly, too, to say that the gods have made the world, and set it in order, and arranged it for the use of man? In the first place, what could possibly induce them to take such trouble?—

"What could they gain from such a race as ours?
Or what advantage could our gratitude
Yield these immortal and most blessed powers,
That they in aught should labour for our good?"

Or what new incident could have broken in upon them, and made them desirous to change their former life? Or even if they wanted to make a world, where did they find any pattern to work by, and how did they set about the business? or how, again, did they ascertain the world-making capabilities of the atoms, unless Nature herself, mother of the gods, had shown the gods all that she herself could do?

"But even had the science ne'er been mine
Of first beginnings, and how all began,
I could show clearly that no power divine
Helped at the work, and made the world for man;
So great the blunders in the vast design,
So palpably is all without a plan.
For if 'twere made for us, its structure halts
In every member, full of flaws and faults.

Look at the earth; mark then, in the first place,
Of all the ground the rounded sky bends over,
Forests and mountains fill a mighty space,
And even more do wasteful waters cover,
And sundering seas; then the sun's deadly rays
Scorch part, and over part the hard forests hover;
And Nature all the rest with weeds would spoil,
Unless man thwarted her with wearying toil.

Mark, too, the babe, how frail and helpless, quite
Naked it comes out of its mother's womb,
A waif cast hither on the shores of light,
Like some poor sailor, by the fierce sea's foam
Washed upon land; it lies in piteous plight,
Nor speaks, but soon, as it beholds its home,
Bleats forth a bitter cry—oh meet presage
Of its life here, its woful heritage!

But the small younglings of the herds and flocks
Are strong, and batten on the grass and dew.
They need no playthings, none their cradle rocks,
Nor ask they with the seasons garments new.
They have no need of walls, and bars, and locks
To guard their treasures; but for ever true
To them, the earth her constant bounty pours
Forth at their feet, and never stints her stores."

Lucretius now goes on to point out in detail the continual waste of everything that is visibly going on in the world around us, and to argue from this that of the whole there must be one day a like dissolution. Earth is for ever being dissolved in water, or broken into dust and being whirled away in air; water in its turn is being for ever drunk up by the sun; and the sun itself is for ever wasting its substance in swift emission of rays.

"So you may see at night such earthly fire,
As hanging lamps, and torches blazing bright,
Darting their flames out, as with keen desire,—
Desire, I say, to feed the wasting light,
Which travelling, still doth on its path expire,
And would if not renewed be broken quite;
But to the dying rays succeed fresh rays,
And on the wall the light unpausing plays."

Again, too, you may see that even stones are conquered by time, high towers moulder and fall down crashing, and even the mountain-summits crumble to decay.

Think of this, too,—if the world was ever born, so surely will it perish. And it must have had a birthday—it cannot have been from everlasting, or else some record would have come to us of times before the Theban war and the fall of Pergamus.

Again, as I have shown that nothing is solid but the atoms, and that void is mixed up with all things, and that void and atoms alone can resist all force and are indestructible, you may be certain, you surely can no longer doubt, that the grave and gate of death is gaping for the whole universe.

Again, I have just shown you how all the elements of the world are engaged continually in a fierce intestine war; and to this struggle there must some day be an end,—either water, fire, or air will one day get the mastery, and then there will be the beginning of the end. Twice, indeed, even already, they feign that the battle has been wellnigh ended, and that water once was all but master; and once again that

fire was, when Phaethon was whirled aloft in the sun's chariot—

"And the boy's hands let go the dangling reins,
And the team tore across the ethereal plains.

But the almighty father, seized with ire,
Launched at the boy the all-dreaded thunderstone;
And as he fell, the Sun, the Sun his sire,
With rapid hand, from headlong Phaethon
Snatched the world's lamp of ever-burning fire,
And gathered up the reins, and one by one
He tamed the trembling steeds, and once again
Mounted his car, and gave new life to men."

And now, says Lucretius, I will tell you in what order the present world evolved itself. And he goes on to describe the first chaotic atom-storm, and the gradual massing together of the earth, and how it cast off from itself the blue heaven, as a kind of husk or covering, and then threw out the fires that make the moon, and stars, and all the other lights that are in the firmanent. First an igneous ether, he says, went up from the earth's surface, which, sweeping round as fire, gradually formed the heavens.

"And this same ether rising, in its wake
Full many a seed of vivid fire up-drew.
Thus when we see the low red morning break
Along the grasses rough and gemmed with dew,
Does a grey mist go up from off the lake,
And from the clear perennial river too;
And even at times the very meadows seem
From their green breast to breathe a silvery stream.

He now adds a number of details as to the formation of the earth's surface, which have been described

already; and again refers to the onward changeless sweep of the ether, which keeps on its even way, unheeding all the turmoil and the storms in the lower air, between the earth and it.

"Onward it ever drives in changeless sweep;
And how it still can so hold on and on
The Pontic sea may teach you, which doth keep
Ever due on, nor turns, for any force,
Its icy current and compulsive course."

Upon this follows a long series of speculations on the motions of the sun and moon, the rest of the heavenly bodies, and the laws which govern the regular recurrence of the seasons, and the changing duration of the hours of light and darkness.

And now, he says, since I have explained in what way everything *might go on* throughout the blue vault of heaven, I will go back to the infancy of the world, and the tender age of the fields, and show what, in their first attempts at child-bearing, they tried to raise

"Up to the shores of light, and gave them there
Into the keeping of the wandering air.

In the beginning, then, the clods gave forth
All kinds of herbage, and a verdant sheen
Was glossy on the hills; and flowery earth
Laughed over all her meadows glad and green:
Then bushes next, and trees of greater girth,
Orderly rising into air were seen;
Which things came forth spontaneous everywhere,
Like a bird's feathers or a horse's hair."

Then gradually, in the manner that has been described already, the earth gave birth to men, and animals, of the kinds that are now with us :—

"But hardier far than we were those first races
Of men, since earth herself did them produce,
And braced them with a firmer frame than braces
Us now, and strung their arms with mightier thews.
Nor sun nor rain on them left any traces,
Nor sickness. And they never learned the use
Of arts, for ages: but like beasts they ran
Wild in the woods—the early race of man.

Their strong arms knew not how to guide the plough,
Or how to plunge the spade and till the plain,
Or from the trees to lop the failing bough.
But what the sun had given them, and the rain,
They took, and deemed it luxury enow.
Nor knew they yet the fatal greed of gain.
But in the woods they sought their simple store,
And stripped the trees, and never asked for more.

For thick the acorns in the forest grew,
And arbute-trees would yield the berried prize,
Which in the winter wears a scarlet hue;
And the earth bore these then of larger size;
And many another suchlike berry too,
It, from its yet unminished granaries,
Gave gladly forth, more than sufficing then
To appease the dawning wants of those poor men.

And like wild herds they clustered to the sound
Of falling waters, loud in many a dell,
To slake their thirst; and as they roamed, they found
The nymphs' green haunts, and there began to dwell;

For there sweet waters gushed from out the ground
In living streams, and on the damp rocks fell—
The damp rocks, green with many a mossy stain—
Then slipt away, and babbled to the plain.

And they knew nought of fire, nor thought to fling
The skins of beasts about their nakedness;
But the wild wood's roof was their covering,
Or rugged mountain cave; and they would press
Into the brushwood, from the buffeting
Of rain and storm, and all the weather's stress.
And nothing yet of rule or law they knew,
Nor how to keep the weal of all in view.

Whatever fortune threw in each man's way,
That each bore off and hoarded as his own,
To grasp and clutch it as his proper prey,
Aloof, and living for himself alone.
And naked in the woods the lovers lay;
And by her lust or his each girl was won;
Or else by force; or bribed, she heard his suit,
By little gifts of acorns or ripe fruit.

And trusting in their strength of hands and feet,
They would outstrip the wild beasts in the wood;
And some to death with ponderous clubs would beat,
And hide from fiercer ones, who sought their blood:
And just where night, with noiseless step and fleet,
O'ertook them, like the dull sow's bristly brood,
Down on the ground without a thought they lay,
And burrowing in the leaves slept sound till day.

And never waking in the dark, with fright
Would they cry out, amazed for all the shade,
And beg the sun to bring them back the light.
But stolid they would sleep, and undismayed,

Till rosy morning pleased to climb the height
Of heaven ; for they, who from their birth surveyed
The light and dark alternate rise and fall,
Trusted the world, nor feared the end of all."

But this state of things did not last for ever. Progress began, and Lucretius here at length describes its advancing stages—the gradual discoveries of fire, of the use of the metals, of houses, of law, of monogamy, and all the other elements and influences of civilisation.. And he then goes on to account for the rise of religion, attributing it, as has been already said, to two different causes—the sight of the wandering images of the gods' forms, and also to ignorance of the hidden forces of nature. Then when once this conception of the gods was formed—

"They gave them dwellings in the heavenly light,
Far off and calm ; because for aye appear
Through the high heaven to roll the moon and night,
Moon, day, and night, and all night's stars austere,
And trailing meteors, vagrant things of light,
And flying fires that wander far and near ;
And because snows and hail and wind are there,
And the hoarse threats that thunder through the air."

O hapless race of men, exclaims Lucretius, when first they taxed the gods with having anything to do with this world of ours and its management! Little knew they the terror of the chains they were binding about themselves ; what wounds, what tears they were preparing for their children's children! For still as we gaze at the vast world around us, the

importunate fear will at times steal into our soul, that the power of the gods may be unlimited; and religion begins to raise its reawakening head.

Having made this digression, Lucretius again returns to his account of human progress, describing the rude, simple pleasures of our earliest ancestors, and warning us that luxuries, though inevitably found out one after one, and inevitably making us discontented with what went before, have made us no better pleased with the present, though they have made us displeased with the past, and that with splendour and refinement have come envy and discontent, from which the simple savage early world was free. Mankind, he says, therefore, ever toils vainly and to no purpose, and wastes life in groundless cares, because men have never learnt what is the true end of getting, and up to what point true pleasure waxes. This by slow degrees has carried life out into the deep sea, and stirred up from their lowest depth the mighty billows of war.

And now all has been told,—how time by degrees brings each several thing before men's eyes, and reason raises it up into the borders of the light; for things in their due order must be thus advanced and brought forward, until they have arrived at the summit beyond which they can go no further.

BOOK VI.

We now come to the last book of the poem; and this, again, opens with another celebration of Epicurus:—

"Athens it was, Athens, most famous name,
Who first gave corn to us, sick sons of earth;
And taught us countless arts, and how to frame
Laws; but she gave her gift of chiefest worth,
When into life she sent that man of fame
Out of whose mouth the words of truth welled forth.
Wherefore his glory through the world is spread,
And still he speaks though dumb, and lives being dead.

For when he saw that each most sore distress
And craving of the flesh was satisfied,
And men forbore from wrong and lawlessness,
And life became secure, and pomp and pride
And pleasures multiplied, yet none the less
Each heart in secret ached, and each breast sighed,
And that for ever in the mind's despite
Were tears and pain our guests from morn to night

He plainly saw that not the honeyed draught
Of life itself did all this teen afford;
But 'twas the vessel out of which 'twas quaffed
That spoiled whatever into it was poured;
Partly that through the potter's careless craft
It leaked; in part, that in its depths were stored
Some bitter dregs, that sent a taint through all
The sweets it held, of wormwood and of gall."

He therefore cleansed men's hearts with his truth-telling precepts, and placed a limit to lust and fear,

and showed the chief good we should all strive to reach, and the narrow track that led to it. And he showed that the ills that plague men in this mortal life were ills that came from nature—from a blind chance or force, call it what we will. For the terror that heretofore had held men in bondage, and indeed still holds very many of them, is to be dispelled by reason, and by reason only :—

"And now, since I have shown the ethereal plains
Of heaven are mortal, and the earth below,
And of all things that heaven or earth contains
The life and movement I have striven to show,
The goal draws near. But something yet remains
To tell. I have another mile to go :
And in the Muse's car must mount on high,
'Mid storms and winds, and tell you how they fly.

For foolish mortals, one and all together,
Say that the calm high gods, by each caprice
Of fretful temper swayed, ordain the weather,
Venting their rage in storms ; and when they cease
From rage, relenting with a cloudless ether."

But in order that reason may drive from us the very remembrance of such old-wives' tales as these, and the unmanning and senseless fear that they would still, if they could, beget in us, I will sing to you of the law and aspect of heaven, and of the birth of the storms and thunders, and of the bright lightnings, that you may see how all goes on by a fixed unbending law, that has no thought of man, nor any care about him ; and that you may spare your pains, and never look to

the skies for omens, nor heed a jot from what quarter the volant fire has fallen.

Thunder, in the first place, is the produce of clashing clouds, which either flap in the wind like canvas stretched and tossing over theatres, or, filled full of wind inside, burst suddenly as a distended bladder does.

It lightens, too, when the clouds have struck out by their collisions many seeds of fire; but we hear the thunder after we have seen the lightning, because, though the two are really simultaneous, the sound travels more slowly than the light does. There are also other ways in which the clouds

> "Dye all the landscape with their wingèd light,
> And with a rapid quivering flashes out
> The sailing storm."

For sometimes the fire is caused, not by the clouds themselves, but by the wind working its way into them, and growing hot by its own velocity. This takes place, you must know, when the clouds are very dense, and are piled up into the heaven to an unimaginable height:—

> "For do but note what time the storm-wind wild
> Comes carrying clouds like mountains through the air,
> Or on the mountain's selves the clouds are piled
> Motionless, and each wind is in its lair,
> Then may you mark those mountain-masses proud,
> And huge caves built of hanging rocks of cloud."

Well, it is through these cloud-mountains that the storm raves and prowls, and pent amongst the caves

and precipices, howls like a pack of wild beasts, and, seeking a way out, rolls together seeds of fire, and at last comes bursting out in forky flashes.

And now I will tell you another thing;—I will tell you by what law

> "The mighty thunderbolt
> Goes through the walls of houses like a shout;"

piercing things that no earthly fire can pierce—nay, not even the fire of the sun in heaven. Lucretius fulfils his promise at great length, and devotes nearly two hundred lines, of no great interest, to his account of these thunderbolts; asking in the middle, not without pertinence, why, if they were hurled, as was said commonly, by the gods, to execute their vengeance, so many of them fell in the seas and deserts, and why the rest so rarely hit the only people for whom they possibly could have been intended.

From these subjects he passes on to the laws of earthquakes, the way in which the sea is still supplied with water, although so much is being constantly evaporated off its surface, the action of volcanoes, the rise and fall of the Nile, and a variety of other minor phenomena. He then at great length gives his explanation of the action of the magnet; and then suddenly leaps from this to a very short passage on the laws of the propagation of disease, which he traces to various conditions of climate, and the perpetual flying about in the air of particles that are hurtful to life, when attacking it under certain conditions. And it makes, he says, no difference whether we travel to places unfavourable to us, and change the atmosphere which

wraps us round, or whether nature without our choice brings to us an atmosphere unsuited to us, or something to the use of which we have not been accustomed, and which is able to attack us on its first arrival.

He then, without more preface, at once plunges into a description of the great plague at Athens, borrowed from the celebrated account given by Thucydides. Such a form of disease, he says, and a death-fraught miasma, once within the borders of Cecrops defiled the whole land with dead, and unpeopled the streets, and drained the city of its citizens. Rising first and starting from the innermost borders of Egypt, having travelled through long reaches of air and over floating fields of sea, the plague pitched at last on the whole people of Athens :—

"The pestilence would first the head assail,
And then the bloodshot eyes, wherein there stood
A dull set fire ; and next the throat grew pale
Inside, and all its passage blotched with blood.
Then ulcers formed, anon the voice would fail;
The tongue, the spirit's spokesman, would exude
Blood also, and relaxed in every string,
Lolled in the mouth a parched and listless thing.

Next down the throat the insidious pest would glide,
And through the breast assault the heart's own door;
Then slowly would the vital power subside,
And through the mouth a stench begin to pour
With the decaying breath"

And so the description goes on for about a hundred and twenty lines, adding detail of this kind to detail, touching by the way on the agony and despair of the

sufferers—how no remedy could be found anywhere—and at the appalling spectacle—

"How medicine muttered low with voiceless fear."

And this above all, says Lucretius, heaped death on death;—whenever any refused to attend their own sick, killing neglect soon after would punish them for their too great love of life, by visiting them in their turn with as foul an end, abandoned in their turn, and forlorn of help.

"They too who stayed to tend the beds of death,
Themselves anon were seen to droop and die,
Drawing contagion from the tainted breath
That thanked them for their kindness piteously."

And at length so great was the mortality, so many were the bodies in vain crying for burial, that the old rites of sepulture continued no more in the city, with which pious folk of old had been always wont to be buried: for everything was confusion and dismay, and each man would sorrowfully bury his own, in any way the present moment allowed.

"And many a direful deed did men do then,
Urged on by sudden want and poverty;
For on the funeral pyres of other men
They thrust their own poor kin uproariously;
And wranglings rose, and oft their blood they'd shed,
Dogged, and dying ere they'd leave their dead."

And with these lines the poem of Lucretius ends.

CHAPTER V.

LUCRETIUS AS A POET.

Something has now been seen of what Lucretius did, under both its aspects. We have examined each of the two things he gave to the world, and for which the world remembers him—his system of natural science, and the poem in which he set that system forth. It now remains to us to glance back over both of these, and to take some general view of them, that we may form some estimate of the place their author held both as a poet and a man of science; and also—which is a matter of deeper interest—how he stands, when compared with us, in relation to the deeper and the more perplexed questions of life.

We will consider him first in the character under which he is most generally known and spoken of,—the character simply of a poet.

And here the first and most obvious remark to make is, that though Lucretius was by his genius most undoubtedly a great poet, yet, judging of his work as a whole, he has very certainly not written a great poem. We must say in this case, as Ottilia's tutor says in Goethe's novel, "We presume capabilities; we require

accomplishments." And the "Essay on the Nature of Things" is not an accomplished poem. The very subject itself, and still more the sort of treatment that, for his own purposes, Lucretius thought essential to it, shut out all possibility of its ever being this. By far the larger number of his verses are devoted to explaining facts which not only afford naturally no material for poetry, but which can only be approached fitly in the absence of all poetical excitation. Instead, therefore, of putting poetry into the phenomena he has to deal with, Lucretius has, in the bulk of his work, to root out all that man has already put there. Man, and man's passions, and the human sense of beauty —without these there can be no poetry. Nature is poetical only as connected with these. And when Lucretius deals with nature, it is his great aim to lull passion, fancy, and all emotion to rest, and coldly and calmly to see things as they really are. Much poetry, as we all know, has been written about the moon, and we know well enough the sort of moods of which most of this poetry is the outcome. But when Lucretius writes of the moon, no such moods are his. The moon to him is simply a phenomenon, to be observed coldly, and with no passion, till the secret of its movements is explained, and every trace of mystery stolen from it. So, too, with all the rest of nature—the sun, the stars, the lightning, the thunder, the storm, the clouds, light, vision, and finally human life, and human passion itself—all is to be treated coldly and dispassionately; interrogated and cross-questioned in the pure spirit of prose, though committed afterwards into

a form of verse. But it is a form only—a form that cannot deceive us. The voice is still Jacob's voice, though the hands are the hands of Esau. But it is enough to say that Lucretius, in the bulk of his work, writes as a man of science; and in that is said conclusively that he cannot be writing as a poet. The poet and the man of science may both be dealing with the same object; but the poet, when he deals with nature, tries to raise the commonplace into the region of the mysterious; the man of science tries to bring down the mysterious to the level of the commonplace. And even when the two come to the same conclusion about the same thing, they would no more speak the same words or think the same thoughts about it, than would a lover and a physician who were watching the same girl dying.

Considering, therefore, that a good four-fifths of the work of Lucretius is intentionally, and in its very essence, nothing but pure prose—only prose versified—it is hardly to be expected that it will, as a whole, give us the pleasure of a poem, or indeed leave us with the impression that we have been reading one. Poetry, however, runs everywhere through it, like metallic veins in an ore; and this poetry is of a very high and a very varied quality, though the scattered state in which it has thus been given to us has done much to hinder its popularity, and apparently made its author merely a poet's poet amongst the ancients, as it has left him a scholar's poet amongst the moderns.

For many reasons this is much to be regretted, so great and powerful, as a poet's, his genius was; and

not this only, but so versatile. Few poets of antiquity show such a range of power and feeling, such a combination of humour with gravity, and of tenderness with indignation. Of all these qualities specimens have been given; and though little justice can be done to them in translation, something of their nature will be sufficiently obvious to the reader. There are one or two others that it may be less superfluous to dwell upon. First of these is the rude fierce vigour of his imagination, which will not be content with a hazy presentation of anything, but will have it dragged close before us solid, bare, and naked,—as when, in discussing whether the universe be infinite, he bids us picture its bound, if any bound there be to it, and asks what will happen then if we were to hurl a javelin into the space beyond. In this quality of keen external observation, this attention to the material aspect of things, this habit of conceiving everything in some imaginable or picturable form, he seems to have surpassed all the ancient poets, and not unfrequently puts us in mind of Dante. And he has in virtue of this a quality which makes him, in one particular way, seem to us not so much an ancient as a modern,—that is, his manner of describing scenery, and all the changing aspects of the outer world. Of all ancient poets, indeed, he is perhaps the most picturesque. The early aspect of morning, the low sunlight striking along the dewy grasses, the grey mist going up from the lakes and rivers—these, and things like these, he describes almost as Wordsworth might have described them. There are other pictures, too, equally vivid—such as that of the

square towers of a town, which, as we approach them, look rounded in the haze of distance; or that of the coloured awnings flapping above the crowded theatre, with the bright-coloured sunlight pouring down through them. Then, again, there are descriptions of storms and storm-clouds, their shapes, their movements, their slow weird changes, which are not unlike the verse of Shelley or the pictures of Turner, and to which no counterpart can be found in ancient literature. There are, too, a number of lesser touches—such as his mention of the way in which, as we walk at morning, our faces are brushed by the dewy threads of the gossamers, or by floating balls of thistle-down. Whilst to heighten the effect of these, and to fill it in, we have perpetual allusion to the way in which our other senses, besides that of sight, are touched by the outer things of nature; how our nostrils, for instance, are met with a pungent smell as soon as a night-light is extinguished suddenly; or how the air by the sea-shore breathes on our faces salt, with the moist brine. In fact, Lucretius, more than any other of the great ancient poets, seems to bring back to us the *atmosphere* of the past. We seem, as we read him, to be actually breathing the air that he breathed, to be smelling the same smells, and hearing the same noises, and to see the skies, and seas, and hills, through the same liquid distance.

We must be careful, however, not to read our own sentiments into Lucretius; nor to think that, though he gives us all the pictures of storm, and cloud, and sunshine, of sea and valley, as accurately, and with as

much care, as a modern poet might, that he was like a modern poet in his feeling about them. The case is quite otherwise. In his descriptions of nature, Lucretius is a utilitarian, not a sentimentalist. His descriptions are not pictures to be looked at for themselves; they are diagrams to illustrate the text of his scientific discourses. Some pleasure, no doubt, even as pictures, they did give to him; but this pleasure was secondary, and in many cases he would seem to be hardly conscious of it. Only dimly, and in the shape of the animal quickening of the spirits brought about in the spring-time, or in the sensuous pleasure of lying on green grass and feeling the cool shelter of trees, does he seem to have realised what joy a man may have in the world's outer beauty. And in this he was like all the other ancient, as contrasted with the modern poets. But the ancient poets as a rule not only felt less for nature than we do, but they also said less about it, and therefore the contrast between them and us is less striking.

But though Lucretius did not, as Wordsworth or Shelley did, nor even as Ausonius, Claudian, and the later Latin poets, feel the beauty of nature as a spectacle, moving them by its varied outlines and its ever-changing shades and colours, he did feel to the full the sublimity of it, as a vast immeasurable force, revealing itself indiscriminately now in this way, now in that—in the earthquake, in the thunderstorm, or the power of turbulent waters. This feeling, however, we must remember is very different from that which prompted such lines as these:—

> "There are two voices—one is of the sea,
> And one is of the mountains—both divine;
> They were thy chosen music, Liberty."

Nature is the hero of the poem of Lucretius; but it is not a hero that has any sympathy with man, or can be anything to man, excepting in so far as man can use it. For the rest it is celebrated as a thing of boundless power, and, as such, a thing sublime and awful, but a thing as well of boundless impotence, that is exalted by the poet, only to be again dragged down by him, and which he would teach man to look at with fearless and equal eyes. Lucretius has no desire to worship Nature, sublime as, in its power, he feels it to be. He feels rather a sense of still greater sublimity in achieving the splendid victory over his own impulse to worship it, and the same impulse in other men, by which he knows that they too are tormented.

This is the one notion that runs through his whole poem; he is man's champion, as against all other forces. He tilts like a knight-errant against every form of terror, one by one unhorsing them, and leaving them disarmed and prostrate; charging first at the most importunate and the most formidable, and then, having cleared the ground about him, demolishing at his leisure the lighter and more scattered squadrons.

And thus though his poem, as we have said, is composed so largely of what is properly speaking pure prose, if we look at it by the light of the writer's intention, instead of what he has actually accomplished, we shall come to see in it the outlines of a true poetic whole. We shall see that there is in it something

epic; we shall see in it one single purpose being worked out to its end without pause—and this purpose an heroic one—the destruction by a mortal man of all the terrible immortals, and the robbing the whole frame of things of their immemorial menace. We shall see that in the arrangement of the argument there is poetic art also, as it gradually rises in the middle to the demolition of that stronghold of religion, the immortality of the soul, and then slowly brings us to confront lighter difficulties, as though a storm were slowly drifting away from us, and letting a gradual sunlight in on us through the clearing skies.

Of course, in view of this, it may be contended by some that the "Essay on the Nature of Things" must take rank, as a whole, as a great complete poem. To a certain extent disputes of this kind are disputes of words merely, and there is little good in pursuing them. Perhaps we shall gain the best notion of the true poetic character of the poem of Lucretius as a whole by comparing it to the history of Herodotus, which has, as a whole, a fully equal title to be considered poetry. There is in Herodotus the same epic treatment, the same *quasi* artistic massing of materials, the same constant presence of potential poetry, the same constant presence of actual prose. But in the fate of the two writers there has been this difference, that whereas the poetry of Herodotus has been as wings to his prose, the prose of Lucretius has been a dead weight on his poetry; and in addition to this, there is yet another misfortune to be mentioned—that the poetry of Lucretius has been also a dead weight on his science.

CHAPTER VI.

LUCRETIUS AND MODERN THOUGHT.

A DEEPER consideration now remains for us. We have seen what Lucretius was as a man of science. We have seen also what he was as a poet. In his first capacity, if he is judged on his own merits, his work will seem to us but an antique curiosity—a piece of scientific bric-a-brac. Judged of as a poet, we may each give him what place we will. But the special tastes, neither of the antiquary nor of the literary critic, are tastes of the first importance, or of any universal interest. Books were made for men, not men for books. Art and poetry are valuable only if they can be absorbed into life: life is not valuable because it can be absorbed into art and poetry. And though Lucretius, as a distinct subject of study, may afford keen pleasure to some of us, and seem a matter of really very grave moment, we should recollect, to the world in general, how trivial such mere student's interests are. Looking on Lucretius, however, in another light, not as scholars, or as critics, or as literary epicures, it is possible to connect him with other interests that are of really vital moment—interests to the house of which science, and

art, and literature, are properly only doorkeepers. And yet, even looked upon in this way, he will suggest thought, rather than dictate it. To many of us, however, he can hardly fail of being very suggestive.

To begin then. We have already seen in some detail what his science was. Let us now briefly compare that science, and the methods it was founded on, with the science of our own day. If we consider the various details of his theory of things, and judge of these by the exact form which he gave to them, it is, of course, plain at a glance how remote they are from what we now hold to be true. It will be seen, to a certain extent, that this could not be otherwise, if we merely consider what his conception was of the size and shape of the universe—a conception which he seems to have adopted with but small reflection, and the truth of which he took but small pains to verify.

But his science differs from ours in a deeper way than in any such superficial grotesqueness of detail. The entire foundation of his system is essentially defective and insecure. His first principles are crude, loose, and puerile. Such, for instance, is his conception of gravity, and this conception is the corner-stone of his whole edifice. Weight, as he explains it (weight with him being the one motor power in the universe), and the tendency of every substance to be for ever falling *downwards*, is, strictly speaking, unthinkable. How, in infinity, can there be either an *up* or *down*? Starting with a premiss like this, it is clearly impossible that he can know anything scientifically of the laws of motion. It is evident then, even if we go no

farther, from the very nature of the case, what a want there will be in any explanation he can possibly have to offer us.

And there are many more wants of a like kind—an absence of many conceptions which we now see to be essential to a true understanding of almost anything. Chief amongst these is his incapacity to conceive of the propagation of energy without the propagation of matter. Of how things can interact on each other from a distance by means of waves, of tremors, of vibrations, he knows nothing, he dreams nothing. All material interaction is conceived of by him in the crude form of material projection. A word, for instance, is a body with a definite shape, which strikes our ears as a stone might. Our sight of a door is produced by the whole of that door's surface striking our eyes, as a stone might. And all kindred phenomena are explained in a like way.

With so narrow and incomplete a conception of the powers that matter might possess, and of the aspects under which it was necessary to study and observe it, it is evident that under no circumstances could he have arrived at any real truth about things. And even on his own showing, his own first principles are quite inadequate, and he is perpetually making to them certain vague and unacknowledged additions. To take, for instance, his theory of vision, and the perpetual emanation of films from the surface of things, he makes no attempts to explain why this emanation takes place. Matter, according to him, tends to always fall, unless forced upwards by other

matter, or unless rebounding off it. If this be the only tendency of matter, it is clearly inexplicable why the surface of everything should be for ever flying off from it, at an incalculable velocity,—not downwards only, but upwards and sideways also.

Again, he seems often to have a momentary glimpse of laws, with which, as if by accident, he explains some single phenomenon, and then forgets and never again recurs to them. Thus he seems to have some notion that the velocity of falling bodies will be in some proportion to the distance they have to fall. It is in this way he explains the extreme heat of the mid-day sun. The films of the sun, he says, have so far to fall that when they reach us they strike us very forcibly. But of the property of bodies that this explanation really implies, he takes no further notice whatsoever.

Again, many of his explanations are actually no explanations at all. In his theory of vision, for instance, he makes no attempt of any kind to explain why the eyes are sensitive, and they alone, to the action of the visual films of things. In his account of the birth of the first human beings from the earth itself, he simply states a number of facts which, even had they been true, would have need of explanation themselves, just as much as the thing they purported to explain ; and again, there are a number of other cases in which he only becomes more definite by deserting altogether his own first principles, and supplanting them, for the time being, with those of the earlier physicists, and attributing to inanimate matter the qualities of a living organism. He thus, as an explanation of the

movements of some of the heavenly bodies, says that they possibly wander pasturing through the fields of heaven, each one seeking after its own proper food. And he thinks likewise that he has explained the appearance of vegetation on the earth's surface, by saying that it grew from it as hairs do from the skins of some animals, and feathers from the skins of others.

This is a subject that can only be touched on here in the briefest and most cursory way. That Lucretius did little to explain the actual truth of things is evident enough, without any comment at all. And enough has now been said to show that even had he possessed far better means for investigating the facts of nature, he would have been still unable to explain them, from his confused and limited notion of the ways in which that explanation was to be sought.

The aim of science is to simplify as far as possible the multiplicity of phenomena,—to trace in them the actions of common laws and principles, and thus to reduce the mystery of existence to a minimum, if not to do away with it altogether. And this Lucretius does not do. He states his principles clearly, and he continually employs them. But they are never really adequate; and there are also many cases in which he does not employ them at all; and many others in which, though they are employed, they are supplemented by him unconsciously by additional principles, with which he makes no attempt to bring them into any connection. And thus his whole sys-

tem, in the form he gave it, is utterly unsound and unstable; and even though it could not be disproved from without, it would have the principles of its own confutation within.

Partly a cause and partly a result of this was the imperfect method which Lucretius for the most part followed. The method on which his conclusions rested was for the most part that of analogy, not of induction. These two methods are not opposed to each other, nor are they mutually exclusive. The first is properly the supplement of the second; the second is the critic of the first. Analogy suggests explanations; induction chooses between those suggested. To modern science this choice is all-important. Lucretius seems to think it comparatively immaterial. Modern science interrogates Nature with a view to showing how things *are* accomplished. The science of Lucretius interrogated Nature with a view to showing how things *might be* accomplished. And thus it is that such science as his was in its very nature not progressive, and could give men no additional mastery over matter.

Nor, indeed, did it even aim at doing so. The spirit that inspired it, and the spirit that inspires modern science, are different things. Knowledge, for its own sake, is the first thing desired by the latter. Knowledge, for the sake of discrediting supernatural agency, is the first thing desired by the former. So far as his mere analysis of matter goes, it is true that Lucretius employs a more accurate method of reasoning than that of mere analogy. He gives us there instances of genuine, if of somewhat crude, induction. But from that

point forward his main concern is to suggest the possible, rather than discern the actual. The skeleton of his argument is as follows: "We see a number of things happen day by day, which we all of us admit to be natural, and which we attribute to no divine agency. Every event that men say the gods accomplish, I can show, by strict analogy, is no more supernatural than these are, and is no jot more wonderful." Thus, when he says that thunder is often caused by the bursting of a cloud distent with wind, as a bladder bursts, his aim is not so much to show that such is the actual cause of thunder, as that thunder, whatever its cause, is really as homely a phenomenon as one of the most trivial events of life, that we all admit has nothing divine about it. This will account, too, for his fancying he has explained the action of lifeless matter, by comparing it to the action or the growth of an animal. The suppressed premiss is, the animal is not divine. It seeks its food, or its feathers grow, without the intervention of the gods. The aid of the gods is no more needful to explain why the stars roam through heaven, or why living things grow from the lifeless earth.

But great as are the differences between this science of Lucretius and that of modern times, we must not forget how much they have in common. His very method is but a part of the modern method, or rather it may be said that it is the modern method in its infancy. Both start with the same fundamental notion, that for the sum of things there may be found a natural explanation; that everything is part of a

single order; that this order is to be understood by observation, not by assumption; that the only organs of observation are the senses; and that the unknown, which the senses cannot reach directly, they can reach indirectly through the known that is immediately before them. Thus one of the most grotesque of the doctrines of Lucretius—that of the size of the sun, moon, and stars—is founded, as has been observed already, on an approach to the true method.

But not only in many places does he approach the true method, but in his more general views of things he all but arrives at what are now held to be the true conclusions. His general forecast of what the order of things must be is the same as that of our modern speculators. His scientific prescience is the same as theirs; only he is like a Moses, who may merely see the promised land afar. He cannot go over Jordan and make it really his own, see what are the actual grapes that grow there, and enter into the cities walled up to heaven. He has planned a conquest, but he has not really made it.

How insecure his structure was, how easily injured by the very arguments by which it was supported—what a contrast it presents in this way to the structure of modern science—must be apparent to any one who examines it. There is hardly a detail in it that does not exemplify this. For instance, it will be remembered that he explains the phenomenon of reflection, by saying that images rebound from things that are *smooth and hard*. An antagonist might at once ask him how he accounted for the reflections

in water. He lays it down in speaking of the soul entering the body, that "whatever oozes in through another thing is dissolved, and therefore dies." An antagonist might ask him how, were this true, images could pass through glass. Again, as to these same images, it might be asked of him how things so fine, as he conceives them to be, could carry air before them, as he says they do; or how this air could pass, as on his principles it must, through transparent things, which are evidently air-proof. In another place he says that, "if the mind be immortal, it must have five senses. But there can be no senses apart from the body." And yet he attributes to the mind one of the most important of all the senses—namely, sight. It sees, he says, just as the eyes do, only its vision is provoked by finer images. In his account of the voice, and the way in which we hear it, he says that a word as soon as it is uttered splits up into a number of words, and can thus be heard by a number of people at the same time. His own manner of reasoning might be used against him here. Words being material, cannot be infinitely divisible. If they split into any great number, they will become inaudible. But it may be said that when we hear a word, a number of such words enter our ears. Were that so, the more people there were within reach of a voice, the weaker to each one would that voice sound, as there would be fewer of these wandering words to enter the ears of each; and thus, suppose a room were filled with a thousand people, each of these would hear worse than if it were only filled with a hundred

people. These are but a few instances out of many, of the way in which Lucretius can be confuted by his own reasoning.

But if we consider the general result of his teaching —his first principles and his last conclusions—if we consider these as he taught them, and not the ways by which he arrived at and supported them, we shall see that, as far as these go, his message to the world and that of modern science is practically identical. Human life, in both systems, is the same momentary phenomenon in the great and ever-changing evolution of things. It is the result of a power that knew not what it did in creating it. A little while it is, and again a little while and it is not. It is but a bubble on the surface of the great flux of matter. It is an isolated thing, connected with no interests beyond itself. It is to be judged of and ordered with reference to itself solely. It is to be valued solely on account of its present resources, and all these resources are to be expressed in terms of conscious and of realised happiness. Lucretius says this as distinctly, and thought he could prove it as surely, as Professor Huxley or Auguste Comte. In relation to human life then—in relation, that is, to the thing that alone gives anything any interest for us—the materialism of Lucretius and the materialism of our own day are in exactly the same position.

But this leads us on to the consideration of another and a deeper difference than any we have before been dwelling on. This is, that life itself is not the same thing for us as it was for Lucretius. Men's eyes have

been opened since his day, and they have become conscious of new difficulties; they have had new experiences of which he knew little or nothing. Since he lived, religion and philosophy have transmuted the face of life, and have unfolded in human nature capacities that were before not bargained for.

To begin with what is commonly called philosophy it can hardly fail to strike any one who is in the least acquainted with metaphysical speculation how strangely confused Lucretius is in his treatment of mind and matter; how little he sees the difficulty of tracing the connection between the universe we are conscious of, and the mind that is conscious of it; how little he sees what sensation really is; how completely he confounds it with the external cause that produces it. To say that without a mind to conceive what we call the universe, no universe is conceivable,—to say that mind creates matter just as truly as matter creates mind,—is, to any one at all trained in exact thinking, a commonplace. But to the whole side of the question here indicated Lucretius seems an entire stranger. Many of our most eminent modern physicists are practically much in his case, it is true; and remind us, to quote the words of one of themselves, "what drivellers even men of strenuous intellect may become, through exclusively dwelling and dealing with," not, as this writer says, "theological chimeras," but with the physical side of things merely, to the exclusion of the metaphysical. But they, though they practically lose sight of the other side of the question, yet theoretically acknowledge, for the most part, that the other side

exists; and is only not a subject for study, because it is so great a mystery that no study can unravel it. The following are the words of Professor Tyndall:—

"The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granted that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously; we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one to the other. They appear together, but we do not know why. Were our mind and senses so expanded as to see and feel the very molecules of the brain,—were we capable of following all their motions, all their groupings, all their electric discharges, if such there be; and were we intimately acquainted with the corresponding state of thought and feeling,—we should be as far as ever from the solution of the problem, 'How are these physical processes connected with the facts of consciousness?' The chasm between the two classes of phenomena would remain intellectually impassable."

But of this difficulty Lucretius knows nothing. He does not see that two classes of phenomena exist at all, and how closely each is dependent upon the other. As a suggestive illustration of the gulf between his mind and the modern mind with regard to this question, we may compare his words with the words of a modern poet, where the two are contemplating the same event, and expressing it in almost the same language. A passage in which Lucretius speaks of the destruction of the existing universe has been already quoted, describing how one day it shall all crumble, melt, and utterly pass away, and leave no-

thing behind it but invisible atoms and deserted space. Exactly the same thing has been said in words which we all know far better.

> "Like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep."

But how differently do Lucretius and Shakespeare conceive of the same catastrophe that is predicted in the verse of both of them! Lucretius simply means that the world which is made up of atoms will be one day shattered, and become atoms again; it will, in short, be pulverised and reduced to the dust that it was made of. But Shakespeare means far more than this. To him the atoms and the dust are no more lasting than the universe that has been built, or that has built itself, out of them. They, too, are an insubstantial pageant likewise; they, too, have no existence but in dreams—the dreams the stuff of which we ourselves are made of. The language of Shakespeare may not be strictly philosophical, but it expresses a meaning that is at the root of all philosophy; it expresses a meaning which Lucretius seems to have had no glimpse of.

But not only is his position with regard to philosophy so different to what ours is; his position with regard to the worth of life, and religion as connected

with life, is even more different. The crude and puerile theology with which he had to combat, it was easy enough to prove a useless factor in any theory of the conduct or existence of life. Starting with his empty space and atoms, as the raw material of everything, he could show easily enough that no such gods as the world, he knew, believed in, could be of any assistance in explaining how the universe was manufactured. But the God which modern science encounters, and whose aid it is endeavouring to dispense with, is a very different God from these; He is a God to whom time and space are nothing, and who is behind the atoms themselves, making them what they are, and being the one cause of their existence. The ways in which modern theists have expressed the connection of God with the world, and the creation of the world, have been very various both in form and meaning. But—to take as an instance such a phrase as this, "The universe is a thought of God,"—they one and all show us how different a thing is the theism we are calling in question now, to that which was called in question in the ancient world. And that theism has thus grown a profounder thing, shows us also how the world has grown more and more to see the profundity of the enigma of existence for which it has held theism to be the only solution.

The mere enigma of existence, however, is not the only one that now confronts us. We find ourselves perplexed by problems that are yet more importunate, and yet more difficult to deal with—problems not concerning the origin of the world, and of life and con-

sciousness, but with the use to be made of life and consciousness when originated. Men during the last two thousand years have been growing more and more conscious of a worth, a solemnity, and a purpose in human life. They have felt more and more that it must have some important end; they have been troubled more and more with aspirations towards things they have named holy, and high, and sacred. They have become convinced that these are the things they ought to live for, and that life is something worse than worthless if they fail to do so. And all this inward consciousness has associated itself, and been absorbed into, their conception of God,—a God to whom they felt that they were rising, and who on his part was, they felt, condescending to them.

Whilst, however, the ideal of life has been thus growing, thus taking a grander and more august shape, and been catching brighter colours and a purer light, the actual facts of life have remained much the same. And thus the contrast between what ought to be and what is has grown more marked, more painful, and more perplexing, and men have come to be tortured with a new set of doubts and questions. Is the moral life only a dream? If it be not—if it be the real end of man—how is it that it seems so few can attain to it? If justice be the thing that in some moods we feel it to be, how is it that injustice seems everywhere to have the mastery?

Germs of this view of life are doubtless to be traced in Lucretius; but they were not distinct enough in his mind, or often enough present with him, to perplex his view of things, and his facile explanation of the

universe. How easily, for instance, and with what slipshod ingenuity, does he dispose of the problem of free-will! How little does he see how much, at least to some men's reason, may seem to hang on a denial of it! The contrast between his attitude and that of men in later ages, in the presence of the same facts, and trained in the same school of reasoning, is illustrated very forcibly by a comparison between him and the Persian philosopher-poet, Omar Khayyám, now so well known to English readers through the translation of Mr Fitzgerald. Omar, like Lucretius, was a materialist; and like Lucretius, by virtue of his materialism, was a disbeliever in all theology. But to Lucretius this disbelief was pure gain. For the Persian, it raises as many problems as it solves. Both say alike that there is no God, and no life hereafter. But Lucretius says this with an earnest and grave content. Omar says it with a fierce despair, and would reason and observation let him, he would gladly embrace the faith that he is thrusting from him; and this gives to his language a passionate bitterness that in Lucretius is quite wanting. The presence of a mindless uniformity everywhere, that takes no heed of man, and knows nothing of him, Lucretius contemplates with complacency. Omar discerns in such a spectacle food for another temper. He sees that not only is nature thus "rid of her haughty lords," which is all that Lucretius sees, but that the soul of man is rid also of its desire, and its comforter. He does not congratulate men upon this discovery; he commiserates them. There is no help anywhere,—this is what he says to them: there

is no help anywhere, and who will show us any good?

"And that inverted bowl they call the sky,
Whereunder crawling, cooped, we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for It
As impotently rules as you or I.

With earth's first clay they did the last man knead,
And there of the last harvest sowed the seed;
And the first morning of creation wrote
What the last dawn of reckoning shall read.

Yesterday *This* day's madness did prepare,
To-morrow's silence, triumph, or despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you come, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where."

And here again, when urging every argument he can think of to prove how self-contradictory is the very conception of a God, there is the same note of despair audible at the discovery that these contradictions exist:—

"What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something, to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted pleasure, under pain
Of everlasting penalties if broke!

What! from his helpless creature be repaid,
Pure gold for what he lent us dross allayed—
Sue for a debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—oh, the sorry trade!

Oh Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestined evil round
Enesh, and then impute my fall to sin!

Oh Thou who man of baser earth didst make,
And even with Paradise devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of Man
Is blackened, Man's forgiveness give—and take!'

And the same painful and unsatisfied cry,—the same confession that the burden of the problem of life, whether interpreted by faith or science, is a burden too great for him to bear,—bursts out in these verses with yet more distinctness :—

"Would but the desert of the fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed revealed,
To which the fainting traveller can spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

Would but some wingèd Angel, ere too late,
Arrest the yet unfolded roll of Fate,
And make the stern recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire!"

Of language like this there is scarcely a trace in Lucretius. Life, it is true, he looks upon as in many ways a gloomy thing. Even at its best he does not seem to set a high value on it. But were it freed from the evils which men themselves make for themselves, it would be, he thinks, a desirable possession, yielding us, while it lasted, a tranquil and sufficient pleasure, though not pleasure various or great enough to make us wish for its prolongation beyond its usual

term. At all events, however much he values it, or however little he values it, there is nothing in it to him of that painful mystery by which the heart of the modern world has been tortured, and before which the modern world is now standing with a fresh pang of amazement.

If, then, we would seek in Lucretius for any thoughts or considerations beyond those valued only by the student, the bookworm, and the critic, we shall find that they lie in this—in the way in which he brings home to us the advance which the world has made, not so much in the means for solving the riddle of things, as in the knowledge of how hard and how complicated the riddle is. We have, it is true, ampler means for discovering true answers; but the question grows before us far more rapidly than the answer does. Farther and farther, certainly and more certainly, are men pushing their conquests into regions that were once mysterious, and yet the mystery that has not been conquered remains more formidable than ever; or else, if we would fain have nothing of mystery at all, a choice confronts us more momentous than was over offered to the ancient world. Either man's life is a mystery to be solved by no scientific method, a mystery which no scientific method so much as sheds a glimmer of light on,—either there is an order of things which the proofs and verifications of the physicists cannot touch, or even go near to, things supernatural, supersensual, and essentially unmaterial, whose ways are not the ways of matter, nor the laws of matter its laws; and if this be so, in this region is

to be sought by faith a reconciliation of all the contradictions that torment us: or else, if all this be untrue, then there are really in things no contradictions at all, except those of our own making. Man's moral and spiritual life is a dream. Justice is nothing but a name. It is not a power, and there is no reason why we should look for its supremacy. Men are nothing but machines,—forces of nature, by some means or other become self-conscious; but their lives are without any significance whatsoever. They are but a brief series of so many sensations of pleasure and of pain. If we give life so little meaning as this, we shall of course have less to do to explain it. And yet even if we look upon it in this way, we shall, as has been said before, not have explained it. The perplexity, however, which besets the modern world, is not the inability to explain *how* physical processes are related to the facts of consciousness, as to determine what, if that relation be what many think it is, the facts of consciousness may be worth, and if they have any significance at all beyond themselves.

On the whole, if we compare the state of men's minds now with the state of men's minds as exemplified by Lucretius, it will be hard to say that we have arrived at a clearer or more satisfactory view of things. We have grown wiser, it is true; but we have (so far as mere human intellect goes) grown wiser only by having come to recognise what a very short way our greatest wisdom carries us. Modern science, as a matter of fact, leaves us in greater perplexity than did ancient science. In some ways it may simplify the

mystery of things. But it concentrates this mystery as well as simplifies it. It may reduce it into a smaller compass, but it leaves it more impenetrable. Faith, and the various theologies in which faith embodies itself, offer to cut the knot. Science can only satisfy us by assuring us that, as far as our moral life goes, there is no knot to cut. Philosophy again steps in, and claims that science depends on it, and can have no certainty that is not derived from it.

And now on all sides we see faith failing, philosophies in conflict, and science, though its superstructure is daily growing, feeling its foundations becoming more and more insecure. And amongst the most thoughtful minds, who cannot accept faith as the guide of life, and who yet feel that reason alone will not take the place of it, we find traces theoretically, if not practically, of a despondent scepticism. Let us do our best, they say, and live by what light we have. But these lights are very feeble, and their strongest rays are lost in the gloom beyond us.

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep."

END OF LUCRETIUS.

PINDAR

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE metrical translations in this volume to which the initial "S" is appended, are taken, by the kind permission of their author, from an anonymously published work * by the present Lord Bishop of Salisbury and former Head-master of Winchester College, under whose instruction I made, as a boy, my first acquaintance with that poetry of Pindar, which has remained ever since among my favourite studies. For versions with no distinguishing initial I am myself responsible. Most of the latter have already appeared in my translation of the "Olympian and Pythian Odes" (H. S. King & Co., London: 1876)

On points of interpretation my chief authorities have been Boeckh and Dissen; of general history, Grote; of literary history, Bernhardy; of topography, Wordsworth, Clark, and Isambert ("Guide-Joanne, Grêce

* The Odes of Pindar translated into English Metre (J. Wells. Winchester: 1876).

et Turquie d'Europe"). Other obligations I have tried to acknowledge as they arose, in so far as this could be done without encumbering the pages with an abundance of notes and references.

For reasons which the reader will find explained in the body of the work, I have thought it desirable to treat of the separate Odes, neither in their chronological order, nor according to their traditional division into the Four Books of Olympians, Pythians, Nemeans, and Isthmians. But as the latter arrangement has been followed (I believe) without exception by editors and translators, it has seemed convenient that the Table of Contents should be followed by a further Table or Index, showing in what chapter of my book the chief mention of each Ode is to be found.

F. D. M.

RUGBY, 1878.

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PINDAR.

CHAPTER I.

GREEK CHORAL POETRY—ITS FORM.

The poems of Pindar are the most considerable surviving specimens of the Choral Ode, an important and characteristic product of Greek genius, to which modern literature presents no exact analogy. Poetry in the modern sense of the word was only one of the elements which entered necessarily into its composition. With this were inseparably combined Music, both vocal and orchestral, and a third element, which, in default of a better name, may be called the Dance, but which differed wholly both in character and object from its modern namesake. The result was a complex work of art, of whose effect some idea may be formed by imagining the performance of a cantata, sung, in solemn or joyous procession, by a *corps de ballet* to the accompaniment of a moving orchestra of flutes and harps. The whole performance was, originally at any

rate, conceived and directed by a single artist, who thus combined the functions of librettist, composer, and ballet-master. And though in practice no doubt the poet, as time went on, more and more delegated the two latter sets of duties to subordinates, yet we find him to the last retaining a certain amount of responsibility and claiming a certain amount of credit, not for the verses only, but for the accompanying music and spectacle. It is to be noticed further that in this threefold combination the element of Poetry always maintained its supremacy, the Music and the Dance remained always in due subordination to it. Such a phenomenon as the modern Italian Opera has made familiar to us — a *libretto* overshadowed and made insignificant by the music of which it is the vehicle rather than the theme—would have shocked a Greek's sense of artistic propriety. "Songs," says Pindar,* are "lords of the lyre:" and as the lyre obeys the song, so the dance obeys the lyre,—"Golden lyre, the dancers' step lists thy bidding!" † The Greek Choral Ode required, then, not merely a combination of these three elements, but a combination of them in due subordination to one another, the Ballet adapting itself to the Music, and that again to the Poem, which was the groundwork of the whole structure.

Ancient authors classify, with great precision, but perhaps with an excess of subtlety, the various subdivisions of Greek Choral poetry. Originally, no doubt, the distinctions which they draw corresponded

* Ol. ii. 1. † Pyth. i. 2.

to real and essential differences of theme and treatment. The Pæan, for example, was originally a solemn hymn to Apollo sung to the monotonous and stately accompaniment of the ancient four-stringed lyre. The Dithyramb was once a wild improvisation in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, and was accompanied properly by the shrill and exciting music of the flute. These and other varieties of the Ode arose in different parts of Greece, and were marked by the special characteristics, and appropriated to the peculiar religious observances of the tribes with whom they originated. But, as time went on, the development of international festivals, and the ever-increasing intercourse between the different tribes of Greece, drew more and more the representatives of the various local schools of poetry into acquaintance and connection with one another. Then gradually each began to influence, and be influenced by, the art of its neighbours. The Pæan gained freedom and enlivenment from contact with the Dithyramb, the Dithyramb borrowed from the Pæan something of its sobriety and stateliness. The harp and the flute, no longer the badges of rival schools, combined in rich and effective symphonies, solemn or orgiastic by turns, according as either element was allowed to prevail in the combination. Thus, while retaining their original names, and enough of individuality in form for musicians to distinguish them, the various species of Choral poetry drew closer and closer towards a common type. We hear of "Hymns," of "Prosodia," of "Pæans," and "Dithyrambs," and fragments of each kind have been

preserved to us from the general wreck of Greek Lyric poetry. But we can see in these no very marked differences of theme, of style, or even of metre; and it is almost always impossible to decide to which class any fragment should be assigned, which we do not know, upon external evidence, to have belonged to one class and not to another.

A class of composition, originally widely distinct from both Pæan and Dithyramb, but which in time became, so far as we can judge, almost indistinguishable from either, was the so-called "Hyporchema" or Mimic-ballet. In this performance a narrative poem was sung (of course with musical accompaniment), while the dancers represented the action of the poem in a species of pantomime. The Hyporchema was thus, as it were, a link between Greek Choral poetry and the drama. It is impossible to determine how far exactly it differed from the later developments of the Pæan, since in this too the gestures of the dancers in some way illustrated the music and the poem. Perhaps we may get an idea of the difference by distinguishing sharply between the successive *sentiments* (hope, fear, triumph, &c.) expressed in a poem, and the *actions* described in it (as an attack, a repulse, a murder, a sudden discovery, and the like), and imagining the gestures of the Pæan-chorus as contrived to illustrate the former, and those of the Hyporchema to mimic the latter. There is no conspicuous dissimilarity of theme or treatment between the extant fragments of Hyporchemata and the other classes of Choral Odes. Narrative passages abound in the "Hymns" and

"Prosodia," no less than in the "Hyporchemata," and, for anything that we can see to the contrary, the pantomimic method might have been applied to the one as well as to the other. But it is clear that in all these matters the Greeks had a very nice sense of artistic propriety, and in the lack of more complete information, we must suppose that the gestures which were suitable to the lively and cheerful Hyporchema would have been considered unduly realistic, and therefore indecorous, in the solemn and magnificent "Pæan" or "Encomium."

To Stesichorus, a Sicilian poet of the sixth century B.C., Choral poetry owed the final arrangement of its metrical system. Thenceforward a perfect Choral Ode consisted of a succession of stanzas arranged in "ternaries" or groups of three, the first stanza in each group being called the Strophe, the second the Antistrophe, and the third the Epode. Any one of these stanzas, viewed in itself, seems quite irregular in its construction: it may consist of any number of lines up to a dozen or thereabouts, and these lines may vary indefinitely in rhythm and length. But on examination it will always be found, that an Antistrophe corresponds in rhythm—line for line, and foot for foot—to the preceding Strophe; and further, that *all* the strophes of any one Ode are identical in rhythm (so that, in fact, all the Strophes and Antistrophes are but repetitions of a single form of stanza), while the Epodes similarly correspond to one another, though they differ from the Strophes and Antistrophes. Every Ode accordingly, of whatever length, employs two forms

of stanza only; and if we represent one by the letter A and the other by the letter B, the successive stanzas of the whole Ode will be represented by the sequence AAB, AAB, AAB, &c. The *rationale* of this structure is simple enough. The Ode was to be sung by an advancing procession of dancers, whose dance consisted of a succession of similar figures, each figure being followed by an interval of rest. For the sake of symmetry it was arranged that each figure should be subdivided into two exactly corresponding halves, every step and gesture of the first finding its reflex in the second. The first half-figure was called the "Strophe" or Turn, the second the "Antistrophe" or Return, and the period of rest between the figures the "Epode"—*i.e.*, the *Coda*. These natural divisions of the dance were regulated by corresponding changes in the music: the melody which accompanied the Strophe would be repeated *da capo* for the Antistrophe, and a second theme would be introduced to fill the interval of the Epode while the dancers rested. The Poem, adapting itself to the requirements of this arrangement, assumed the form we have above described: the balanced rhythms of its Strophes and Antistrophes answering to the evolutions of the advancing dancers, while the Epodes were sung during their halts. In the "Pindarick" odes of Gray—*The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*—a similar structure has been applied with good effect to English versification.

In short processional Odes, circumstances sometimes made it unnecessary or undesirable that the progress of the Chorus should be broken by halts.

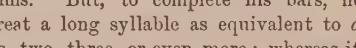
In these, accordingly, we find Strophes and Antistrophes, but no Epodes. An example of this is Pindar's Twelfth Pythian. Also the Dithyramb, in the hands of Lasus of Hermione, who is said to have been a teacher of Pindar, flung off altogether the fetters of Strophe and Antistrophe, with how much advantage to itself it is impossible, in the absence of evidence, to say. And the choruses of Attic tragedy (which were not independent compositions, but, as it were, choral fragments scattered over an otherwise non-choral work) employed, for some good reason doubtless, a far less regular arrangement of Strophes, Antistrophes, and Epodes. But apparently all other lofty forms of Choral poetry, and certainly all Pindar's finest Odes, adopted uniformly the threefold sequence of Stesichorus. That sequence, in its beautiful symmetry, and apparent intricacy yet real simplicity, is a truly characteristic product of Grecian genius and taste. Devised at first mainly with a view to the convenience of the dancers, it served also to break most agreeably to the ear the monotony of a long series of repeated stanzas and melodies. Like all that is best in Greek art, aiming at use, it produces beauty with it.

Little that would be interesting to the general reader is known as to the musical element in a Choral Ode. We have seen that it employed voices and instruments, both stringed and wind. Yet harmony in the modern sense seems to have been unknown to the Greeks. They combined bass and treble parts — or, as they called them, "male" and "female" — both in vocal and instrumental music, but apparently always in

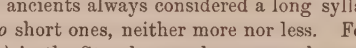
octaves. A modern reader, accustomed to the rich and delicate chords and dissonances of the music of our own day, or the magnificent contrapuntal achievements of Bach and Handel, will wonder at the seemingly extravagant language held by classical authors as to the effect on the emotions of men, and even on the character of nations, produced by mere unharmonised melodies, and those, according to modern ideas, of the most unimpressive kind. But if the Greeks were ignorant of harmony, their appreciation of pitch and rhythm seems to have been infinitely keener than our own. Some of their scales involving quarter-tones would baffle the most accurate of modern singers. And the rhythms of a Pindaric Ode would be incomprehensible to a modern audience, accustomed only to two-time, three-time, and their multiples.* Let any

* It is true that Mendelssohn, in his 'Antigone' and 'Œdipus' choruses, has employed modern musical notation to represent the sequences of long and short syllables in elaborate Greek choral rhythms. But, to complete his bars, he has been obliged to treat a long syllable as equivalent to *any number* of short ones, two, three, or even more: whereas it seems certain that the ancients always considered a long syllable as representing *two* short ones, neither more nor less. For example, a *trochee* (–⏑) in the Strophe may be answered occasionally by a *tribrach* (⏑⏑⏑) in the Antistrophe, but never by a *proceleusmatic* (⏑⏑⏑⏑), and so with other feet.

The Sapphic metre has been several times set to music by modern composers. But the rhythm of its three long lines is necessarily somewhat distorted in the process—usually thus:



instead of the original



musical reader attempt to reduce to bars the rhythm of the first line of Pindar's First Olympian,—

and he will see how subtle must have been the ears which could appreciate and enjoy such measures. Yet it is unquestionable that the Greeks *did* appreciate and enjoy them, and *did* sing melodies which no modern keyed instrument could reproduce, with the most nice distinction of the minutest intervals. It is then the less surprising, though it is surprising still, that they were contented in their music to gratify their sense of melody and rhythm, without exploring the mines of musical enjoyment which have been opened to modern audiences by the discoverers of counterpoint and harmony.

It may not be inappropriate to close this chapter with an extract from Pindar's First Pythian Ode, describing in a highly imaginative vein the soothing effect of the harp, not on human passions only, but on the wrath of gods, and even (as he fondly dreams) on brute and inanimate natures—the eagle and the lightning.

Strophe.

"Golden lyre, that Phœbus shares with the Muses violet-crowned!
Thee, when opes the joyous revel, our frolic feet obey.
And minstrels wait upon the sound,
While thy chords ring out their preludes, and guide the dancers' way.
Thou quenchest the bolted lightning's heat,
And the eagle of Zeus on the sceptre sleeps, and closes his pinions fleet.

Antistrophe.

King of birds! His hooked head hath a darkling cloud
o'ercast,
Sealing soft his eyes. In slumber his rippling back he
heaves,
By thy sweet music fettered fast.
Ruthless Ares' self the muster of bristling lances leaves,
And gladdens awhile his soul with rest.
For the shafts of the Muses and Leto's son can melt an im-
mortal's breast."

By "the shafts of the Muses and Leto's son" (*i.e.*, Apollo), Pindar means the piercing strains of the lyre. Then in the Epode the measure changes—the dancers halt in solemn awe and expectancy, while the poet describes the opposite effect, the sense of horror and aggravated misery with which the music of the lyre strikes the ear of Zeus's enemies,—the foes of good, the vanquished giants of old, "dreeing their doom" in Tartarus, pinioned beneath the snows and fires of Ætna.

Epode.

"But, whom Zeus loves not, back in fear all senseless
cower, as in their ear
The sweet Pierian voices sound, in earth or monstrous
Ocean's round.
So he, Heaven's foe, that in Tartarus lies,
The hundred-headed Typho, erst
In famed Cilician cavern nurst,—
Now, beyond Cumæ, pent below
Sea cliffs of Sicily, o'er his rough breast rise
Ætna's pillars, skyward soaring, nurse of year-long snow!"

CHAPTER II.

GREEK CHORAL POETRY—ITS MATTER.

From the *form* of a Choral Ode we pass now to consider its *matter*,—the occasions which produced it, and the sources from which its themes were drawn. It might, perhaps, have been expected that these would have been identical, that the occasion which produced an Ode would itself have supplied the poet's theme, and that an Ode of Pindar, composed (let us say) to commemorate a chariot victory at the Olympian games, would have been occupied mainly with a description of the circumstances and consequences of the victory. But such, as we shall see, is by no means usually the case. The actual occasion of such a Triumphal Ode is sometimes touched upon so lightly, as to leave it open to dispute whether the victory which it commemorates was won at the Isthmus or at Nemea, at Delphi or at Thebes; whether the victorious car was driven by its owner or by a professional charioteer; whether the commemoration followed instantly upon the victory, or whether days, months, or even years had elapsed between them. These topics are not, indeed, actually excluded from the Ode. The poet touches upon them,

but as it were *en passant*, and usually by means of allusions, sufficient, no doubt, pleasantly to remind the victor and his friends of circumstances with which they were already familiar, but conveying little information to readers who know of these circumstances no more than the Ode itself tells them. Generally from the briefest notice of these points which would satisfy the poet's sense of the compliments due from him to his patron's achievements, the Ode passes with all convenient speed to a wholly different range of topics—to legends of ancient gods and heroes, moral reflections on every circumstance of human life, from the cradle to the grave, expositions and justifications of religious, social, and political creeds, from all which the poet only returns at rare intervals, and, as it were, perfunctorily, to his professed theme—the actual occasion of his poem.

These occasions were of every conceivable kind. Every circumstance of Greek life, civic or private, gave opportunity for a Choral Ode. The love of pomp and ceremonial was one of the most marked features in the national character of the Greeks; and in all their ceremonies an indispensable and prominent element was that of Music, in that wide sense in which the Greeks always used this term, including under it Poetry and the Dance. Was a temple to be founded, a magistrate to be installed, a distinguished athlete welcomed home from a successful visit to Olympia or the Isthmus, a local deity to be honoured at the annual recurrence of his festival,—the talents of the choric poet were at once in requisition. Kings and free

states not unfrequently maintained a troupe of professional singers and dancers, ready to undertake at the shortest notice the performance of the most elaborate Ode. It appears that similar troupes were sometimes attached to the service of an eminent poet, and were sent by him, with an Ode composed for the occasion, to attend public or private celebrations in foreign states. And such was the general musical culture of the average Greek citizen that, in the absence of professionals, it was sometimes possible to organise an amateur chorus willing and competent to undertake their duties. Other occasions there were of far different character, but equally demanding the services of the choric poet. The citizens of some distressed town, decimated by plague or famine, or alarmed by natural phenomena, which they took for portents, would endeavour to appease the offended gods by propitiatory sacrifices and the performance of a solemn Pæan. Or the kinsmen of some youthful warrior, fallen on the field of battle, and borne home a corpse to his weeping bride, would call on the poet of the day to grace the dead man's obsequies with his most pathetic dirge — strains which should, in the language of a Roman poet,*

> "Bear to starry heights away
> That Might, and Mettle bold, and golden Worth,
> And grudge dark Death his prey."

It is difficult to classify, according to any strict principle, all these various occasions; but we may perhaps distinguish among them three chief kinds, and group

* Horace, Odes, iv. 2.

the different species of Greek Choral poetry according as they were intended (1), to grace the services of religion, or (2) to do honour to distinguished men of the day, or (3) simply to heighten the pleasures of a banquet. To the first class will belong hymns sung at the regular festivals of the national gods, relating their titles, their attributes, and mythical exploits—Prosodia or processional-chants ; Pæans—originally propitiatory hymns designed to avert from the state some specific calamity, but afterwards including songs of public thanksgiving—or prayers for the favour of a particular god at some special crisis in the fortunes of a state. It will embrace also the later and more solemn forms of the Dithyramb, and to some extent even the earlier, in so far as these were consecrated to the worship of Dionysus. The Parthenia, or maiden-hymns, sung by choirs of girls, seem to have been a branch of the Prosodia, and will naturally be placed in the same class. We hear also of Enthronismi, performed apparently at the erection of a new statue of a god in its appropriate niche in his temple. But of all this class of Choral poetry only fragments remain.

Our second class will include Encomia, or complimentary poems in honour of living princes and their exploits ; Epinicia (closely connected with Encomia, and perhaps to be regarded as a branch of them), which celebrated victories in the various local athletic contests of the Greeks, and especially in the four great games ; * also Odes for the installation of magistrates, a

* *I.e.*, the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian festivals.

specimen of which, by a fortunate blunder of a grammarian, has been preserved to us among Pindar's Epinicia, and now figures in his extant works as the Eleventh Nemean Ode. Lastly, we must add the Threni, or dirges, of which no complete specimen remains. Amid all the ravages made by Time on the grand fabric of Greek poetry, there is none, perhaps, more to be regretted than that which has destroyed for ever works embodying probably the deepest thoughts and loftiest aspirations of the Greek race on the subject of death and the life beyond it.

Of the third class, the most important seem to have been the Scolia, or cross-songs. To perform these the Chorus was divided, and the successive verses assigned to its different sections, so that the song appeared to travel backwards and forwards in a crooked track across the room. Such Choric Scolia were probably confined to the banquet-halls of princes. The ordinary Scolium, of which we hear so often in accounts of private entertainments, employed no Chorus at all. It was a mere *solo* performance, begun by one of the guests to the accompaniment of a harp, which he played himself; presently he handed the harp across the table to another feaster, who continued the performance, and so on. The Choric Scolium, on the contrary, required all the regular apparatus of a Choral Ode, the singers, the orchestra of flutes and harps, and the ballet.

The chief sources which supplied the themes of Choric poetry in its highest developments—the Hymn, the Pæan, and the Encomium—have already been in-

dicated. The chiefest of all was Mythology. In the ideal legendary world of gods and heroes, the Choral Ode in its perfection lived and moved and had its being. The loves and wars of deities, the fabled glories of old heroic houses—

> "Thebes and Pelops' line,
> And the tale of Troy divine;"—

such were the themes from which its poets mainly drew their inspiration. The princes and nobles, in whose honour Encomia and Epinicia were performed, boasted descent from the supernatural beings by whom this ideal world was peopled, and their exploits were described by the Choric poet, not merely as attesting their divine ancestry, but as, to some extent, lifting them into the world of gods and heroes, and making them partakers in its life. In the opening stanzas of the Sixth Nemean Ode, the physical and intellectual achievements of man are described as bridging over, in part, the gulf which separates him from the gods, whose blood he shares.

> "One is the race of men and gods: one womb
> Teemed with us all that breathe with vital breath.
> But oh, how widely severed is our doom!
> We naught, and good for naught;
> They—for their home the brazen heaven is wrought,
> A home that knows nor change nor death.
> *Yet somewhat we approach the immortal kind*
> *In stalwart strength and mighty mind.*"—(S.)

Accordingly, the exploits of a divinely-descended noble were regarded as the sequel and continuation of those

of his superhuman ancestor. The god is invoked to rejoice in his descendant's prowess, and the highest compliment which the poet can pay to the descendant is to recall the legendary achievements of the ancestor, and compare them with those of the descendant. Again, the misfortunes of ancient gods and heroes, and their ultimate triumph over them, are employed to console their supposed descendants for baffled projects, and to encourage them to new aspirations in the future. And if, as sometimes happens, the poet desires to convey to his patron some lesson of warning or advice which he fears may be unwelcome, a reference to ancient legends, and usually to those connected with the house or city of his patron, enables him often to point his moral under the guise of paying a compliment. We shall see hereafter how, in the hands of a great poet like Pindar, the legends of antiquity became a potent instrument for instilling lessons of practical and political wisdom, of morality, and of generous ambition, into the minds of his patrons. Less skilful artists doubtless employed the myths with less discrimination and less earnest purpose, using them merely as "purple patches" to conceal the nakedness of their fancy, and heaping them together without order or selection to swell their odes into the required number of stanzas. It is said by Plutarch that Pindar himself, in his early days, was jestingly rebuked by his countrywoman, the poetess Corinna, for a similar undiscriminating use of mythology. "One should sow," she said, "with the hand, and not with the whole sack." If this tale be true, he seems, if we may judge from his earli-

est extant ode, to have outgrown his fault before he reached the age of twenty.

The death of a good and great man was regarded by the Choric poet as an actual translation into this ideal world of gods and heroes. There he met with his divine and heroic ancestors, and thenceforward shared their life and pleasures. As might therefore be expected, the extant fragments of Pindar's Dirges deal chiefly with this theme. A mass of occult speculation on the life after death was preserved in certain secret confraternities among the Greeks, whose meetings were attended with the celebration of the rites called "Mysteries." These "mysteries" have been described as "a sort of Greek Freemasonry." It is not for those uninitiated in either craft to judge of the justice of such a comparison. It is believed that sundry fragments of Pindar's Dirges bear traces of the influence of these speculations. In others he seems to adopt a more popular and less lofty creed; and in one especially, which we will take this opportunity to quote, he pictures the righteous dead as enjoying a state of unalloyed felicity, which, as he describes it, is a simple idealisation of perfect earthly happiness such as the Greeks conceived it. Thus * he paints the life of the denizens of his "Earthly Paradise," for "earthly" we must own it to be:—

"On them the sun in his strength sheds light, while here on earth is night,
And in meadows of red roses lies the suburb of their town,
With fruits of gold and spikenard bowers o'ergrown.

* Fragment 94, Boeckh's edition.

And some in steeds and sports, and some in dice,
And some in harps have joy, and all wealth's flowers bloom ever there.
And fragrance spreads about their country fair,
As in the altar's dazzling flame they mingle all sweet spice."

As a companion picture to this, we may take a strophe from Pindar's earliest extant Ode, the Tenth Pythian. Here he is describing the bliss, not of the righteous dead, but of the happiest of living men, the wondrous Hyperboreans, dwellers "at the back of the North-wind," in a country visited by heroes like Heracles and Perseus, but to which "nor fleets nor feet" may avail to guide adventurous mortals.

"Nor at their customs stands
The muse aloof, but all around, the maiden bands
Dance ever to the sound of harp and shrilling fife;
Their locks with golden laurel crowned, they feast in careless joy.
Disease nor wasting eld may e'er their bliss alloy.
A consecrated race, remote from toil and strife."

Not dissimilar is the vision of a city in time of peace, sketched in a fragment of a Hymn by Pindar's contemporary and rival, Bacchylides.*

"But mighty Peace to mortals brings a dower
Of Wealth, and honeyed Music's every flower;
On carven altars then the fat of ox
Wastes in the yellow flame, and fleecy flocks;
And striplings' thoughts are bent on sport, and flute, and feast."

In other fragments of Pindar's Dirges we find allusions

* Bergk's Poetæ Lyrici, p. 966.

to the life after death as a period of probation, and of an "atonement accepted by Persephone," the awful mistress of the lower world. And elsewhere doubtless he introduced pictures of souls awaiting at the tribunals of Æacus and Rhadamanthus that unerring and inevitable sentence which should award to them, according to their works, an eternity of bliss or torment. And if the subject of a dirge had been an Æginetan of some great Æacid house, he would naturally (we may imagine) pass on to trace the legendary career of the hero, who had exchanged the sovereignty of Ægina for a judgment-seat in the nether world, and would show how the justice of his earthly life had fitted him to discharge the awful duties of judging the spirits in prison.

The Hyporchema or Mimic-dance seems to have been considered as a lighter and livelier style of composition than the Hymn or the Pæan. Yet its performance was connected with the services of religion; it was exhibited on occasions where we should rather have expected the performance of a Pæan, to avert the dreaded consequences of some supposed portent; it invoked the favour of deities, and related the adventures of heroes. One fragment of a Pindaric Hyporchema appears to narrate some exploit of Heracles (Hercules) of a literally bloodthirsty character.

"He drank them mingled in blood,"*

it begins, and then comes a description of the blows of his club "crushing through bones and marrow."

* Fr. 77 (Boeckh).

Another,* which we will quote entire, from a Hyporchema performed to appease the Sun-god on the occasion of a solar eclipse, gives a vivid picture of Greek superstition, and is alluded to (though not quoted) by the Roman Pliny.† The original poem is in a light and rapid metre, illustrating the close connection between the Hyporchema and the Dithyramb.

"Why, all-seeing light of the Sun, to mine eyes dispensing sight,—
Why hast thou stolen in daytime thy soaring orb from view—
And all to nothing hast brought the wings of human might,
And wisdom's paths—and speedest along a darksome way,
To bring to pass some marvel new?
Nay, in Zeus' name, I pray thee, bid that thy flying steeds
Turn to the weal of Thebes this portent in all men's sight!
Yet oh, if thou tellest oí wars, or blight, or of whelming snow,
Or faction fell, or seas outpouring to drown our meads,
Or freezing of fields, or a summer bedrenched with furious rain,
Or if Earth thou'lt drown, and store it with new-made folk again,
'Mid my wailing fellows I'll bide the blow!"

As to the Scolia, or drinking-songs, we have seen that a choral treatment of them was the exception and not the rule. And probably, even when so treated, they made less use of the stores of mythology than the more serious classes of Choral poetry. Their usual themes would naturally be the praise of Love and

* Fr. 74 (Boeckh). † Nat. Hist. ii. 12

Wine. Yet, since Love and Wine were personified by Greek fancy in Aphrodite and Dionysus, we need not consider even the scoliastic poet as wholly precluded from availing himself of the chief fountain of Greek lyric inspiration—the Myths.

Speaking generally, and not dwelling on unimportant exceptions, it may be stated that, whatever was the especial occasion of a Choral Ode, the chief materials of its themes were supplied by sources, of which all classes of Choral poetry availed themselves alike. And chief among these were the legendary world of gods and heroes, and the unseen world of spirits, which Greek religion conceived as embracing and underlying all the material universe.

CHAPTER III.

PINDAR'S LIFE AND BIOGRAPHERS.

It has seemed desirable to preface the story of Pindar's life with some account, however imperfect, of the general character of Greek Choral poetry. By realising the essential connection of its loftiest forms with the mysteries of Greek religion and the inspiring legends of the Heroic Age, we are enabled better to understand the peculiar veneration which the Greeks felt for their greatest choric poet. Plato * speaks of him as belonging to a class of poets who deserve the title of "divine." And it is clear, on abundant evidence, that he was generally regarded by the Greeks not simply as a great artist, but as an inspired and saintly sage, the author of works deserving a place beside those of Homer among the Sacred Books of the nation. This view of Pindar's character is illustrated by various legends, which we shall notice in their place,—legends which, however historically baseless, were repeated and believed all over Greece,—of a special and mysterious intercourse between the poet and the unseen world,

* Meno, 81 B.

and of marvellous signs of divine favour towards him manifested in his lifetime, and even after his death.

It seemed desirable also that the reader should form some preliminary idea of the great demand for choral poetry among the Greeks of Pindar's day, and the qualifications needed by a poet in order to supply that demand adequately. Such qualifications would include a familiar knowledge, both practical and theoretical, of the whole range of poetical, musical, and spectacular art, and of the methods by which each branch could be made to co-operate most successfully in producing a required effect. Further, the mythological treatment of his themes demanded from the poet a minute and comprehensive acquaintance with the whole body of Greek divinity, including not merely the legends common to the whole people, and the established articles of mythological belief stereotyped once for all by a Homer or a Hesiod, but the floating local traditions of every petty tribe, and town, and even family. And from this vast store he had to select with infinite tact and discretion, topics, not only suitable to his occasion, but adapted to please a mixed audience, whose peculiar religious and political prejudices and theories of orthodoxy in matters mythological he could not with impunity disregard. On two points at least we shall have gained light by considering the combination of gifts and training necessary to produce such artists, and the wide field of occupation which would be open to them when they appeared. For so we shall better understand how it was, that—unlike most Greek literary men of that day, unlike the great

tragedians and historians of Athens—the choral poets almost of necessity adopted their art as a regular profession, and derived from it, not fame alone, but a substantial livelihood. We shall also better understand the value set by their countrymen on the few really eminent professors of so difficult an art, and the eagerness of patrons to secure their services. And thus we shall be prepared to believe the stories preserved to us by Pindar's biographers, of kings and governments vying with each other to do the poet honour, and establishing with him relations of personal and quasi-political friendship.

We must accept the main outlines of Pindar's life as they are related by the somewhat questionable authorities to whom we owe all our evidence on the subject.

Pindar, they tell us, was a Bœotian, born either in Thebes or in an adjacent village, about the year B.C. 522. By a singular coincidence, the great master of the Dorian lyre was born during the celebration of the Pythia, the quinquennial festival of Apollo, the God of Delphi, whom the Greeks worshipped as the especial patron of Dorian nationality, of poetry, and especially of the lyre. This coincidence is known to us from Pindar's own express statement,* and it is almost the only fact of his life which can be regarded as unquestionably ascertained. His father's name was apparently Daiphantus, for Scopelinus, whom some authors treat as the poet's father, seems really to have been an uncle or stepfather who superintended his early musical edu-

* Fr. 205 (Boeckh).

cation. The family of Pindar boasted an early connection with Sparta, and a descent from the hero Ægeus. So he tells us in an extant Ode,*

"From Sparta springs my own ancestral boast, as legends tell.
Sprung from thence, to Thera's land
(Heroes of Ægid stock) my fathers came."

But elsewhere he claims as his ancestress the Arcadian nymph Metope, mother of Thebe the mythical foundress of the Theban nation: he tells us of

"My mother's mother bright, Stymphalus-sprung!
—Metope she, that Thebe bare."†

His family, it is said, were musicians by inheritance, and excelled especially in flute-playing, the national art of Bœotia. Through that country the river Cephisus ran into the Copaic lake, and both river and lake were celebrated for the reed-beds from which the Theban flute-makers obtained their materials.

Pindar rapidly learned all that Scopelinus could teach him, and was then transferred by him to study the lyre at Athens under the eminent Dithyrambic composer, Lasus of Hermione. At the age of sixteen we hear of him still at Athens, installed, it would seem, on his own account as a trainer of choruses. Between this period and the performance of his earliest extant Ode (B.C. 502) he returned to Thebes, and met, as was mentioned in the preceding chapter, the poetess

* Pyth. v. 68.
† Ol. vi. 84.—Stymphalus was a city of Arcadia.

Corinna of Tanagra. The story there related of her playful rebuke, "One should sow with the hand, and not with the sack," exhibits the poetess in the character of a good-natured superior. Other legends tell of a rivalry between them: we hear of musical contests in which Corinna was declared victor,—five times in succession, says Ælian;* "whereupon"—adds this author with delicious gravity—"he called her a pig!" Pausanias† suggests that the good looks of the lady had something to do with the judges' verdict; but remarks, too, that they may have preferred her dialect, as easier and more familiar, to Pindar's super-accurate Doric. A third and hardly consistent tradition tells us that Corinna blamed another poetess called Myrtis for daring, in spite of her sex, to enter the lists against Pindar.

At the age of twenty (B.C. 502) Pindar's reputation as a rising poet seems to have been fairly established. A prize in the Pythian games had fallen to a young Thessalian named Hippocleas, and a noble countryman of the victor, a member of the almost royal house of the Aleuadæ, invited Pindar to celebrate the success in a Choral Ode. This circumstance produced the Tenth Pythian, the earliest of Pindar's extant Odes. It exhibits little or no trace of the heedless youthful exuberance reprehended by Corinna in his earlier efforts. Its mythological element, if not introduced with quite the dexterity which delights us in his finest poems, is yet not excessive, and is pleasing in itself. Pleasing also is the address of the young poet to his

* Var. Hist. xiii. 24. † Bœot. xxii.

noble patron,* grateful for the opportunity of distinguishing himself, yet modestly conscious that he deserves the confidence placed in him :—

"In friendly Thorax rests my trust, who, toiling for my grace,
Hath yoked this car of song with steeds in fourfold trace,
And gives me guidance back for guidance, love for love."

By "yoking the four-horse car of song," the poet means in plain prose, "giving the commission to produce this Ode, with its four ternaries of Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode." From this time to the day of his death an endless succession of similar commissions streamed in upon him from all parts of Greece. His fame flew east and west, north and south, from Rhodes to Sicily, and from Thessaly to Cyrene on the far-off coast of Africa. The royal families of Agrigentum and Syracuse supplied him with liberal patrons, and he is believed to have been more than once received as an honoured guest in the palace of Hiero, who for eleven years, from B.C. 478 to B.C. 467, reigned in the latter city. Throughout this period, and for about ten years after it, Pindar's genius appears at its greatest height. Afterwards we seem to trace a certain decline of vigour. Yet there are noble passages in his later poems : and even the latest have their own peculiar charm of serenity and kindliness,—a tranquil sunset, as it were, succeeding not unmeetly to the fiery splendours of his noontide course.

* Pyth. x. 64.

Thebes, the native city of Pindar, continued to the last his home. There, beside the fountain of Dirce, the traditional site of his house was pointed out some six hundred years after the poet's death to the traveller Pausanias. Another Pausanias, it was said, had once sacked Thebes at the head of a Spartan army, but had spared the house which bore the inscription,

"Burn not the roof of Pindar the poet!"

Sober history indeed refutes this story. Pausanias did, it is true, in the year B.C. 395, lead a Spartan army against Thebes, but he retired baffled from before its walls, and forfeited his kingdom by his retreat. But there is no such reason for disbelieving the similar tale that the house of Pindar was spared by Alexander the Great,* when in B.C. 336 he destroyed Thebes, and sold its inhabitants into slavery. The English reader will remember the lines in which Milton has made this tale immortal:—

> "The great Emathian conqueror bade spare
> The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
> Went to the ground." †

In this house the poet lived and wrote, "drinking," as he tells us, ‡ "the pleasant waters" of the sacred fountain hard by. Once at least his relations with the rulers of his city became unpleasantly strained. In a poem composed for an Athenian festival his compliments to Athens provoked the jealousy of the

* Æl. Var. Hist. xiii. 7: Dio Chrys. Orat. II. de Regno: Eustath. Procem. 28, &c.

† Milton, Sonnet III. ‡ Ol. vi. 85.

Theban government, and a fine was imposed on the poet, which was paid by his Athenian friends. Yet his affection for his native town remained unaltered. In the opening of his First Isthmian Ode, he declares that the praise of his "mother Thebe" is, and must be ever, a theme to which all his other commissions must give way :—

> "Whate'er of toil my busy soul did weave
> To thy high call I yield.
> . . . . .
> Is there a theme so dear
> As parents' praise to children's ear?"—(S.)

He turned a deaf ear to the invitations of his friend King Hiero, who, we are assured, offered him an honourable position in Syracuse. The poets Simonides and Bacchylides were already domiciled in Hiero's court, but Pindar preferred his independence and his home in Thebes. "I would live for myself, and not for another," he said, when questioned afterwards on the subject.*

From his Theban home Pindar made frequent visits to friends in Ægina and elsewhere. He was present on several occasions at the festivals of Olympia, Nemea, and the Isthmus. At Delphi also he was a familiar guest with the priests of the temple, and an iron chair on which he sat to conduct his Hymns was long exhibited among the curiosities of the place. More than one foreign city complimented Pindar by appointing him their "Proxenus," an office regarded

* Eustath. Procem. 26.

always as conferring distinction on the recipient, with duties somewhat analogous to those of our modern "consuls." He was Proxenus for Athens, and also for some Achæan town,* perhaps Dyme.

In Thebes Pindar lived, and in Thebes he was buried, yet he died (we are told) in a foreign city. At the age of eighty (B.C. 442) he had left his home to attend a festival at Argos. And there, in the public theatre, surrounded by the favourite and most familiar associations of his life, the pageantry of religion and the "flower of music," the old man fell suddenly into the arms of a youthful friend, and expired. His daughters Protomache and Eumetis, who seem to have inherited some portion of their father's talents, conveyed his ashes to Thebes; and an ancient epigram commemorates the loudness of their lamentation, and pays a compliment to their musical attainments. Of his wife Megacleia, and his son Daiphantus, this epigram says nothing. Perhaps both were dead. There is a story of a proposed marriage between one of these daughters and a prosperous citizen. But the father's caution broke off the match. The suitor might be prosperous now, he said, but he was not the sort of man to prosper long. However, we hear of descendants of Pindar at Thebes at the time of its destruction by Alexander. So perhaps the father relented, or the lady may have found a more eligible suitor, or Pindar's family may have been larger than his biographers were aware.

The great poet was gone, but his fame survived him.

* Nem. vii. 65.

The Athenians raised his statue in their city; the Rhodians engraved his Seventh Olympian Ode in golden letters on the temple of the Lindian Athene. We have already noticed the preservation at Delphi of his iron chair; and there too, long after his death, a singular custom connected with the temple services guaranteed the continuance of his fame. Either, as some say, at every sacrifice the priest invoked the shade of Pindar to take his share of the offerings, or, according to another version of the legend, every evening as the temple was closed for the night the sacristan paused: "*Pindar to supper with the god!*" he cried. Then the doors were shut, and there in the solemn darkness of the sanctuary, screened from mortal eye by walls through which no window was suffered to admit, even in daytime, one ray of profane light, the god and his poet-guest, as was piously believed, sat banqueting together till the morning.

The authority of Chamæleon (circ. B.C. 330) is cited for the following legend of Pindar's boyhood: Tired with hunting on the slopes of Helicon, he had flung himself down to sleep, when a swarm of bees settled on his lips, and filled his mouth with their honey. Some accounts transform this incident into a dream. But in fact the myth, for myth it plainly is—an allegory of the simplest kind—is told, not of Pindar only, but of Homer, of Plato, and even of St Ambrose.*

* M. Villemain compares the well-known legend of Horace's boyhood, related by himself—Odes, iii. 4. We might add the tale of Stesichorus and the nightingale—Anthol. Gr. vol. i. p. 31 (Tauchnitz ed.)

Another yet more marvellous legend told how the god Pan had been heard by belated wayfarers singing a Pæan of Pindar's between the peaks of Helicon and Cithæron. His death was made an occasion for other myths. The oracle of Ammon promised him the greatest earthly boon, and his death was the fulfilment of the promise. The goddess of the nether world, Persephone, appeared to him in a dream; and, complaining that she alone of deities had been left unhonoured by his muse, added that he should praise her yet in the land of the dead. In ten days the promise was fulfilled. The poet died at Argos, and immediately after, his spectre appeared to an aged dame in Thebes, recited a new hymn to Persephone, some portion of which she was able to commit to writing, and then vanished for ever into the spirit-world from which it had come.

A late poet, Leonidas, sums his character up in a brief epitaph, which may be rendered thus:—

> "To strangers kind, yet to his townsmen dear,
> Pindar, the Muses' minister, rests here."

Such is the traditional biography of Pindar. But how much of it may be regarded as trustworthy? We might naturally have supposed that the contemporaries who cherished so proudly and so fondly the fame of Pindar, would have been careful to preserve and transmit to posterity a full and trustworthy record of his life. And, in fact, we possess at least four professed biographies of the poet, agreeing fairly even in their minuter details, and appearing at first sight to sup-

ply materials for a tolerably exhaustive and consistent memoir. But on closer examination we find that the evidence furnished by these biographies is by no means of such a character as to deserve unquestioning acceptance. The earliest of them can scarcely have been compiled before the eleventh century of our era —more than fourteen hundred years after the death of their subject. And though they clearly all embody a literary tradition of far greater antiquity, yet even this tradition cannot possibly be traced back beyond a period separated by at least a full century from the latest date which can be assigned for Pindar's death. The earliest authority to whom any of their statements can be traced was Chamæleon of Heraclea, a philosopher trained by Aristotle in that Peripatetic school which was the cradle of Greek literary biography But Chamæleon himself belongs to an age separated by several generations from that of Pindar. His 'Book on Pindar,' therefore, even if it were still extant, would not possess the value of a genuine contemporary record. We should require to be satisfied, before admitting its authority, that it was based upon older and authentic accounts of the poet's life. But it is highly improbable that any such account *in writing* existed before the Peripatetic period. Chamæleon can scarcely have had before him much evidence beyond such as was embodied in oral traditions current among the learned of his own day. Pindar was, no doubt, to these something more than a mere name: they had a fairly distinct conception of his personality, and a general idea of the outlines of his life. But this

idea probably included as much of fiction as of fact. Some elements in it were derived, no doubt, from genuine traditions, handed down from father to son in the families of Pindar and his patrons. But others were due to faulty inferences from these traditions, or to misinterpretations of the poet's own language about himself, or to the existence among the Greeks of a certain stock of floating legends with a continual tendency to reproduce themselves in connection with the name of any illustrious poet—stories of juvenile triumphs, defeated rivals, royal compliments, besides more obviously mythical tales of divine apparitions, and of mysterious influences exerted by poets over the brute creation. A mass of such legend seems to have crystallised round Pindar's name almost in his lifetime, certainly before Chamæleon attempted to write his memoir. And considering that Chamæleon's purpose was probably rather literary than strictly historical, and that his 'Book on Pindar' was only one volume of a series, it is unlikely that in this case he took any special pains to sift his evidence, and distinguish in it the actual from the mythical. As a matter of fact, the one statement about Pindar's life, which was unquestionably derived by later writers from Chamæleon's work, is one of the most unmistakable myths in the whole story.

Chamæleon's book, however, seems to have long held its ground as the standard biography of Pindar. It supplied, no doubt, a starting-point for the researches of the Alexandrian librarian, Aristophanes (in the third century B.C.), to whom we owe our present arrangement

of the Odes. And probably it formed the basis of the lost 'Life of Pindar' by Plutarch, who flourished in the latter part of the first century A.D. Athenæus quotes it (about A.D. 230); and although of the extant "Lives of Pindar" only one—that by Eustathius—refers to it by name, all probably derived from it, mediately or immediately, the greater part of their materials.

It is sometimes possible to verify and extend the meagre records of a poet's life, as presented to us in professed biographies, by a reference to occasional notices of the poet in the writings of other authors, or to internal evidences supplied by the poet's own works. But from neither of these sources can we get much information as to the life of Pindar. Herodotus quotes him, but tells us nothing about him. Thucydides does not mention him at all. Plato speaks in high terms of his writings, but has not a word to say on the subject of his life. Quite late writers, such as Plutarch and Ælian, supply an anecdote or a statement here and there; but on what authority we know not, nor, in any case, do they add much to the evidence of the extant "Lives." It is evident from this silence on the part of his contemporaries, and of the generation which succeeded them, that Pindar played no conspicuous part in the history of his times. The complaint of Plato,* that no Greek poet ever made his mark as a statesman, or soldier, or mechanical discoverer, is well known. There was exaggeration in it; but in the

* Republic, x.

main it was true, and the case of Pindar may serve to illustrate it. Nor can we with much confidence attempt to recover from the works of Pindar such an autobiography, all the more valuable because undesigned, as the ingenuity of modern critics has elicited from the fragments of Theognis. Of the scenes and places which he pictures in such vivid colours, we know not which he had seen in the flesh and which with the eye of imagination. If he describes himself as "guiding the bark of song" to Rhodes, or "shipping a cargo" of encomium for Sicily, or leading the revels "round Hiero's hospitable board,"—these descriptions may indeed be the poetical record of veritable travels, but we can never be sure that the apparent kernel of fact is, in truth, more solid, less ideal, than the imagery which invests it. A consistent Euhemeristic interpretation of a poet's allusions to his own movements would often lead us to strange results. Not every modern bard who tells us of his "slumbers on Parnassus' brow" can be inferred to have trod in fact the soil of Greece. Future biographers of the present Poet-Laureate will scarcely record for posterity, on the evidence of his own early poems, his marriage with "the gardener's daughter," or his visit to "Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold" "in the golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid."

Practically, then, our evidence for the facts of Pindar's life consists of four biographies, compiled fully fourteen hundred years after the poet's death, and forming the latest links in a chain of tradition which cannot be traced beyond the school of Aristotle. It is

impossible to accept such evidence without hesitation; but we have, in fact, no other. At least we may receive it as evidence, if not to the actual facts of Pindar's life, yet to the general impression produced by that life on the minds of succeeding generations. Questionable at best as records of the actual historical Pindar, these biographies represent to us at any rate the Pindar of tradition—Pindar as educated Greeks and modern scholars, following their lead, have been wont to picture him. The best of them, probably, and certainly the fullest, is that prefixed to his 'Commentaries on Pindar' by Eustathius, Archbishop of Thessalonica—a learned and laborious scholar of the twelfth century. A second, of unknown date and authorship, but probably not later than the last mentioned, is known as the 'Vita Vratislavensis,' having been found in an ancient manuscript at Breslau. A third is ascribed to Thomas Magister, a dull and blundering pedant of the fourteenth century; and a fourth—the oldest probably of all, but extremely meagre and unsatisfactory—to the lexicographer Suidas, of whom we only know that he lived at least as early as Eustathius, and at least as late as the close of the eleventh century. When the great modern scholar Boeckh published his magnificent edition of Pindar, the work of Eustathius had unluckily disappeared, and was supposed to have been lost for ever; but it has since been unearthed and made accessible to modern students, first by Tafel, in 1832, and again, in 1835, by F. W. Schneidewin. From the contents of these four biographies, and from

the scanty allusions to Pindar which are scattered over the Greek Anthology, and the writings of such late authors as Plutarch, Ælian, and Athenæus, is derived nearly all that modern research has been able to recover for us of the life of the Theban poet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUR GREAT GAMES.

With but few exceptions, the extant Odes of Pindar are devoted to the celebration of equestrian and athletic successes at one or other of four great national festivals. Fragments of his other writings show that he excelled in every branch of choral poetry; but of all his works, the Epinicia or Triumphal Odes were those which ancient critics most admired, and it is by these alone that modern readers can test his claim to a place among the great poets of the world.

Voltaire, it is said,* once made a great attempt to understand Pindar. But the gorge of the fastidious philosopher rose at the first crude notion which he formed of the subject-matter of the Odes, and of Pindar's relations with his royal patrons. He saw in Pindar only "an unintelligible and bombastic Theban, a poet of the boxing-ring, the first violin of King Hiero!" Eminent Frenchmen, when they give their minds to it, do contrive to express strange opinions on the literature of foreign nations, and of antiquity.

* Villemain, Essais sur la Génie de Pindare, &c., chap. x.

The late M. Thiers, when Mr Nassau Senior asked him, "Do you place Racine above Shakespeare?" replied that he only knew Shakespeare through translations, but that he *did* place Racine above Homer and Virgil! And admirers of Pindar may be consoled by remembering that the critic who dealt so severely with the Theban poet was no kinder to Shakespeare. "He has spoiled the taste of the [English] nation. He has been their taste for two hundred years; and what is the taste of a nation for two hundred years will be so for two thousand."*

The judgment of competent students will scarcely endorse the scornful criticism of Voltaire. Yet it must be owned that a modern reader, plunging without special preparation upon a study of Pindar's Odes, will be not unlikely to find himself, for a time at least, in sympathy with it. To appreciate Pindar, it is necessary to lay aside prejudices, to be prepared for surprises, and to hesitate before forming opinions fixed beyond the possibility of future modification. It is necessary, also, to have some preliminary notion of the ideas, the tastes, and the modes of life of those for whom he wrote. Undoubtedly, if his poems deserve immortality, this will be due to qualities in them independent of the accidents of time and place,—to their power of touching sympathies and appealing to instincts which are common to all men of adequate culture in every age and in every nation. But the surroundings of a poem are apt to distract attention from its deeper poetic qualities. And the latter, in the case of a poet

* See Carlyle's Frederick the Great, book xxi. chap. v.

whose whole style and subject-matter are influenced by his peculiar surroundings, will fail to exert their due effect on readers perplexed at every turn by allusions which they do not understand, sentiments into which they do not enter, and modes of expression for which nothing in their previous literary studies has prepared them.

"*Un chantre de combats à coups de poing*," says Voltaire; and the modern reader, who finds that races, boxing-matches, and wrestlings do in truth supply the chief occasions of Pindar's poetry, will certainly be haunted with a feeling that no treatment, however skilful, could convert such occasions into suitable themes for lofty verse. How could they excite in a poet those deep and genuine emotions of which true poetry is the expression, and which in other ages have been awakened only by great national triumphs and reverses, or by circumstances of absorbing personal interest, the crash of empires or of creeds, the throes of political and religious and moral convulsions in nations or in individuals, the fervours of religion, the raptures and the torments of love?

To justify Pindar's choice of themes, it is not enough to show that there was a demand on the part of his patrons for poetry on such subjects. It must be shown also that athletic contests did, as a matter of history and for sufficient reasons, excite in the Greeks of his day a genuine enthusiasm, and invest themselves with associations which might well furnish matter for poetry. We may not, after all, find ourselves able to share this enthusiasm, but we shall be

less inclined to judge of it harshly if we can convince ourselves that it was sincere.

Now Grecian history supplies abundant proof that equestrian and athletic successes in the four great games of Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus, were esteemed even by statesmen and philosophers as events of serious importance, and that not merely to the individuals who obtained them, but to the states whom these individuals represented. Solon, the great Athenian reformer, offered the enormous reward of 500 drachmas, equivalent to one year's income of an Athenian citizen of the wealthiest class, to the winner of a prize at Olympia, and 100 for a victory at the Isthmus. And it is actually stated that this was a *reduction*, and that before Solon's time the public rewards of victors were even larger.* We hear also that a certain Cylon, who made an unsuccessful attempt to establish himself as tyrant of Athens, backed by a powerful array of kinsmen and admirers, owed much of his influence to an Olympic victory; and that he selected the recurrence of the Olympic festival as a suitable opportunity for his attempt, trusting to the associations which this festival would recall, as likely to influence in his favour the Athenian public. So Alcibiades, when at a particular period in his tortuous political career he desired to produce among the Greeks a feeling of respect for Athens and a weakening of Spartan influence, saw in the Olympic games his best opportunity for effecting this result. Seven four-horse chariots entered in the name of the ambitious Athe-

* Grote's Hist. of Greece, Part II., chap. xi.

nian dazzled the astounded spectators, secured to their owner the first and the second prize, and secured to him further the triumph (for the time at least) of his policy. And at the most critical moment of Grecian history, when the Persian Xerxes was advancing into Bœotia with the innumerable hosts which were to avenge upon Athens the burning of the Lydian capital —when Leonidas and his noble company threw away their lives in vain in the defile of Thermopylæ, and the united fleets of Greece were retiring before the irresistible foe at Artemisium,—not all the perils of their common country could make the Greeks abandon their accustomed festival. "What are the Greeks doing?" asked Xerxes of some Arcadian deserters. —They were celebrating the Olympic games.

Thoroughly to explain the Greek idea of the importance of these contests would require a book to itself. It must suffice to point out various considerations which may assist us to some extent in appreciating it.

We must remember first that the methods of war in early Greece made physical strength and dexterity a really important qualification in a warrior. Of strategy or even tactics we find little trace in the early history of Greek wars. The battles of the Iliad are won by the prowess of individual champions, not by skilful organisation of forces, or choice of positions, or well-timed employment of reserves. To fight in the fore-front of the battle is Homer's conception of a general's duty. And the result of an ancient Waterloo depended on the presence, on this side or on that, of the

more numerous and the more efficient prototypes of "Shaw the Life-guardsman."

Even when the old quasi-feudal military system of Greece had given place to some sort of organisation of forces, when cavalry, heavy infantry, and skirmishers were separately drilled, and employed on a definite principle, individual prowess would still tell enormously on the fortunes of the day. Two long lines of infantry, pushing against each other with pikes,—such was the main aspect of a Greek battle at its most critical moment. The cavalry rarely formed an important element in an army, the archers and slingers were considered an inferior branch of the service; it was in the line of "hoplites" that the mass of citizen-soldiers were to be found. Thus soundness of wind, suppleness of limb, strength, nerve, and weight, were to a great extent the measure of a citizen's power to aid his city in her time of need. And while the legislators of Sparta secured the prevalence of these qualities by a compulsory and universal athletic training, other states encouraged by every available means, by local contests and by rewards to native champions, the growth of athletic tastes in their citizens.

Again and again in Pindar we find athletic triumphs associated with success in war. "Oft," he says, as he praises his favourite Ægina,*—

> "Oft have the heroes she has borne
> The crown of sportive contests worn,
> Oft in rapid fight won fame."

* Pyth. viii. 26.

And so the success at the Isthmus of the Theban Melissus is described as compensating for a terrible military reverse which had swept off four members of his family, and as opening a new era of glory for the house which had ever since lain, as it were, under a cloud.*

"'Twas theirs the gallant steed to rear
And Ares of the brazen spear
Their warlike might did bless;
But on their home in wrath the tempest leapt,
And from their hearth four hero-brethren swept:
Then from the sky once more the storm-cloud wild
Passed! and the earth again with blushing roses smiled.
Such was the will of Heaven. The earth-shaking king
Who loves Onchestus, and the ridge
That towers o'er Corinth's Ocean-bridge,
Bids us once more in triumph sing,
Tuning for their high race the echoing string.
For wrapt in slumber still and deep
Long had their glory lain asleep.
'Awake!' he cried;—at once she woke:
From all her form, as sparks of fire,
Beams of divinest beauty broke,
Bright as when Phosphor leads the starry choir!"—(S.)

And, addressing Aristagoras of Tenedos,† the poet exclaims that a descendant of the mail-clad warriors whom Orestes led from Amyclæ might well be expected to achieve a foremost place among athletes. Thus athletic prowess was regarded by the Greeks of Pindar's day not as a mere useless accomplishment, but as a real measure of a man's worth to his country.

* Isthm. iii. 14. † Nem. xi. 33.

The power of dealing good blows in the boxing-ring, or of grappling an antagonist in the "pancratium" (a sort of mauling-match in which legs and arms were employed *ad libitum*), or of distancing him in the foot-race, made a man a better soldier, and by consequence a more valuable citizen. Even in our own day have we not heard rumours of official recognition of similar qualifications in army-candidates? and was it not the Duke of Wellington who declared that "the battle of Waterloo was won in the playing-fields of Eton"?

But these considerations will not serve to explain the value set by the Greeks on successes in the chariot-race. Unless the victor drove his own chariot, which was not usually the case, no especial physical qualifications were implied by such a victory. Yet these triumphs were as much or even more esteemed than were those of the boxer, the runner, or the wrestler. How was it that the bard could be roused to enthusiasm by the successes of a champion who need not necessarily so much as witness his own victory, much less contribute to it by his exertions?

To answer this question, it is necessary to realise the associations surrounding the whole subject of horse-keeping in Greece. It was the chief outward and visible sign of wealth and aristocracy. The geographical features and the political divisions of early Greece prevented the accumulation of landed property on a large scale. Architecture and the arts of painting and sculpture were not till a later period sufficiently advanced to encourage the display of wealth by the

rearing of magnificent palaces or the collection of valuable works of art. A rich man, who wished to use his wealth like a prince and not like a miser, had a somewhat limited choice of objects on which to expend it. Such were the undertaking at his own charges of some expensive public duty (a "Liturgia," as the Greeks called it), hospitality on a large scale, and, lastly, the maintenance of a fine stud of horses. So intimate was the connection between horse-keeping and aristocracy in Greece, that we hear in one state of "Hippobotæ" or "Horse-rearers" as the recognised title of its nobles. Æschylus calls horses "the ornament of wealthy pride;" Plato couples "wealth and horse-breeding" together as synonyms; and Aristotle remarks that "wherever a state is strong in horses, the chief power will be found to reside with the nobles." Thus the chariot-race recalled associations of wealth and splendour, which dazzled the vulgar, and which, in the judgment even of educated Greeks, at a time when aristocratical sentiment was still prevalent, and a wealthy and ancient house was looked upon as a lingering survival of the Heroic Age, might well be the theme of a poet's homage. It is as the antithesis to the miserly hoarding of wealth, that its liberal expenditure on horses and chariots is admired and applauded by Pindar. Wide is the power of wealth well used,* he exclaims. Wealth decorated with triumphs, and lavished freely on noble ambitions, shines like a dazzling star.†

* Pyth. v. 1. † Ol. ii. 53.

"But if there be whose grovelling soul hath planned
With churlish scorn his store to hug and hide,
Tell him that such have lived unknown and nameless
died." *—(S.)

Every city of any importance in Greece encouraged athletic prowess and lavish expenditure of wealth in its citizens by the institution of local contests, sanctified by all the ceremonies of religion, and placed usually under the patronage of a local deity. But all these minor celebrations were eclipsed by the glories of the four great games, and far above all in unapproachable supremacy towered the majestic feast of Olympia. It is impossible now to trace the steps by which these four festivals raised themselves above the mass of similar gatherings to the dignity of Panhellenic celebrations—*Panegyreis*, as they were properly called, "Universal gatherings." That this supremacy was of comparatively recent date can be shown by many arguments: we may content ourselves with one, the silence of Homer. But in Pindar's time they were generally regarded as having existed unchanged from the most remote antiquity. And around the story of their foundation masses of legend had gathered, connecting them with the greatest names and the most thrilling adventures of the Heroic Age. It mattered not that sober chroniclers, and the records of victories preserved in the great Olympian temple, proved beyond doubt that the Olympia had once been a mere local festival of the Pisatans, or that innovations of various kinds were known to have been introduced

* Isthm. i. 67.

from time to time as to the nature and arrangements of the contests. To Pindar and to the average Greek of his day, the games in which a Thero or an Alcimedon contended were the very games in which the mythical heroes of Greece had shown their prowess, the glorious contests that Heracles founded by the tomb of Pelops.* Thus to engage in them was to assist in maintaining a divinely-ordered institution; it was an act of piety towards the deified founder, as well as to the hero whose tomb they graced, and the god whose presence consecrated the locality. More than this, it was to tread in the steps of divine and heroic ancestors, and to give evidence that the lofty ambitions of a glorious progenitor lived yet in the bosoms of his true-born descendants. Accordingly, all those memories and associations of religion and of antiquity, which formed, as we have seen, the very centre and substance of the highest developments of Greek Choral poetry, were gathered as it were into a focus in the Olympic festival, and reflected their splendours upon the victorious competitors in its lists. The contests of Olympia, says the Roman Horace,† as he recalls the sentiment of Greece on this subject, raise the victors "aloft to join the gods." And this halo of glory, reflected on the victors from the heroic past, seems to Pindar not merely to merit but to demand the noblest utterances of his muse.

"Such service divine at the poet's hand the conqueror's crownèd locks demand:
Lyre and flute and shapely lays
Must join Ænesidamus' son to praise

* Ol. xi. 25 † Odes, I. i. 6.

With honour meet. And Pisa bids me sing,
Whence immortal lays for mortals spring,
When, in the rites ordained of Heracles,
The Ætolian arbiter with sentence fair
Garlands with olive grey the victor's hair." *

The judge, the competitor, and the poet who celebrates his victory, each (be it noticed) is discharging a sacred duty: the rites are "ordained of Heracles;" hence the obligation to fulfil them, and hence the glory which they reflect upon the victor.

But it was not in their religious aspect alone that the great games influenced so powerfully the imagination of every cultivated Greek. He saw in them also the chief and almost the only concrete embodiment of an idea, which in the age of Pindar more than ever before was growing and gaining ground in Greece,—the sentiment of Pan-hellenic unity, the conception of an absolute and even physical distinction between Greek and Barbarian. The period of Pindar's youth and early manhood coincides precisely with the successive invasions of Greece by Persia, which more than any other event in their history taught the scattered clans of Greeks to regard themselves as a single nation. Now the right of competition in the four great games was the privilege of every Greek, and of Greeks alone. Not all the ordinances of Greek religion were withheld from foreigners. Lydians like Crœsus, Italians, Phrygians, are all described as consulting the great national oracle of the Greeks at Delphi; but not the Great King himself could enter a chariot for the prize of Olympia or Delphi.

* Ol. iii. 6.

When the Macedonian princes claimed this right, it was not until satisfactory proof of their Hellenic ancestry had been demanded and furnished that their claim was allowed. Greek princes in distant colonies, like Arcesilas of Cyrene, were careful to retain their position as members of the Hellenic family, by occasional "entries" at one or other of the four great games. Thus these contests reminded the Greeks of their nationality; and every emotion which the thought of that nationality could excite, at a moment when foreign invasion was threatening it with destruction and calling on all who valued its existence to maintain it against the common foe, was aroused by the recurrence of these festivals in the bosom of a patriotic Greek like Pindar, and finds continual expression in his poetry.

But, quite apart from their antiquarian interest, and the religious and patriotic associations which surrounded them, the great games were in their mere external aspect the most magnificent spectacles known to the Greeks. And on this account alone they might well excite the imagination of a people so keenly alive to all the influences of external pomp and splendour. If we may consider Pindar as at all a typical Greek of his own day, it is clear that magnificence for itself, and irrespective of any further associations connected with it, was to them a source of the keenest admiration and pleasure.

It is true that in Pindar's day the magnificent creations of architecture and sculpture, which at a later period were among the chief glories of Olympia, were

mostly yet to come. The colossal ivory statue of Zeus Olympius, the masterpiece of Phidias, and regarded (we are told) less as a statue than as an actual incarnation of Deity, was the work of a later generation, and the temple which was to contain it was as yet incomplete. But what earlier art could do to decorate the place with temples and statues had been done, and its natural features would have been beautiful without the aid of art. Olympia * was a rich and fertile valley bounded on one side by the broad stream of the Alpheus, one of the largest of Grecian rivers, its banks shaded with plane-trees, and its bosom studded with numerous islets. Between Mount Cronius (a conical height covered with pines) and the Alpheus lay the Altis, or sacred grove of Zeus ; and, in a grove of olives, from which the victor's crown was cut, on a declivity of Mount Cronius, was the stadium or race-course. Two brooks run down from Cronius to join the Alpheus, and one of them, the Cladeus, formed a boundary of the Altis. Nearly every feature of the scene which modern travellers have noticed, is noticed also in Pindar,—the river, the olive-groves, Mount Cronius and its trees. The place was treeless once, he says, and Cronius a bare and snowy hill, till Heracles brought from the land of the Hyperboreans trees to crown the victors, and shade the concourse of spectators.† Among these groves and streams, for the five days and nights which the festival occupied, lay encamped a multitude from every tribe and colony of Greece, imposing in its mere numbers, and rendered yet more brilliant by the pres-

* Wordsworth's Greece, p. 386, &c. † Ol. iii. 18.

ence of official deputations (called Theoriæ) from the various states, vying with each other in the magnificence of their dress and equipment. The numerous * well-appointed cars, each drawn by four spirited horses, which started together for the chariot-race, must in themselves have been an exciting spectacle. And the athletes in their manly beauty and splendid muscular development provoked enthusiastic demonstrations from the spectators. A midsummer sun beat with only too fierce a radiance upon the scene by day; and at night, from a hundred banquets, songs of triumph and festivity rose into the clear sky illumined by the full orb of the harvest-moon.†

The Olympian games were celebrated at intervals of four years. During the month in which they were held a sacred armistice was proclaimed by heralds throughout Greece. Thus all its various and often discordant tribes, laying aside for a while their mutual animosities, met in peaceful intercourse to swell the gathering at Olympia. As further illustrating the importance of the games in the eyes of Greeks, it may be mentioned that their unfailing occurrence at regular intervals supplied Greek historians with their chief basis of chronological computation. Such and such an event, they would say, happened in the third year of the 80th Olympiad. The contests themselves were by no means the only sources of attraction to the

* We hear, at Pytho, of a race in which forty cars were *upset*. Such a scene imagination wellnigh refuses to picture. Pyth. v. 49.

† Ol. xi. 75; iii. 20.

general public. Merchants came to traffic, poets and even prose-authors to recite their compositions before the largest audiences that they could ever hope to address. We are told that Herodotus, "the Father of History," recited his great work to an audience of assembled Greeks at Olympia; and that the young Thucydides, who was present, was inspired by the scene with the first conception of his own yet greater work. "If," says a modern scholar, "we could suppose all the best horse-races, foot-races, prize-fights, and wrestling-matches, all the May meetings and musical festivals, to be fixed for the same place at the same time, and then conceive not merely that the Houses of Parliament should adjourn to attend, but that even in time of war a truce should be proclaimed during their celebration — imagine the assemblage of men of English blood from the furthest corners of the known world, to all of whom, and to their children, the name of the victor in the principal race would form an epoch and a date never to be forgotten, superseding that of the monarch or the president,—if, I say, we can form such a picture as this, we shall have some idea of what the festival of Olympia was to the old Hellenic world." *

The moral and social influences of the great games are dilated upon by Greek rhetoricians in terms which to a modern reader may seem exaggerated, but which, at least, serve to illustrate ancient ideas on the subject. "The Panegyreis," says one of these authors,† "were

* W. G. Clark, Peloponnesus.

† Dionys. Halic. Techn. Rhet. c. i.

an invention and gift of the gods to give men a respite from the weightier cares of life, bestowed—as Plato says—by gods in pity for the toil-worn human race. They were drawn together by men of culture, and established by cities by public agreement on public grounds, to delight and entrance those who attended them." Their founders, adds the same author in another place, "making communities to cease from their wars and their mutual differences, drew them together as it were into a single community, the common country of all, there to meet and sacrifice and revel, forgetting all the troubles of the past."*

Precisely similar is the language of Isocrates. "The founders of the Panegyreis are justly praised for bequeathing to us such a custom. They provided that we should meet together, contracting truces and laying aside our enmities: that we should join in prayers and sacrifices, and thus recall the memory of our common descent, and for the future feel more kindly one towards another; that we should revive old friendships and form new ones; and that neither the general public nor the qualified champions should find their time wasted; but that these gatherings of the Greeks should enable the latter to display their gifts, and the former to gaze upon them as they contend; while neither should lack interest in the occasion, but each have cause for pride,—the spectators in seeing the athletes toiling on their account, the athletes in reflecting that it is themselves that all have come to see." †

* Dionys. Halic. Techn. Rhet. c. vii.

† Isocr. Paneg. 44.

The victor in an Olympic competition was mounted upon a tripod of bronze, and crowned with a wreath of olive, cut from the sacred trees with a golden sickle. Public proclamation was made of his name, his parentage, and his native state; and father and fatherland were each esteemed as sharing in the victor's glory. Great was the triumph of a newly-founded city, when for the first time its name was proclaimed by the sacred heralds in the ear of assembled Greece. We may find an instance of this feeling in an Ode of Pindar in honour of the Sicilian Psaumis and his adopted city Camarina.*

"Glory great, O Camarina, brought he to thy peopled town;
Six twin-altars duly decking at the festival most high,
Where, 'mid sacrifice of oxen, in the five days' contests vie
Car and mule and flying courser; and his triumph brought thee fame,
For thy new town's praises mingled with his father Acro's name."

When Xerxes, as has been already mentioned, began his march into Bœotia, and heard from the Arcadian spies that the Greeks were occupied at that supreme moment with the mimic contests of Olympia, he asked for what prize they strove? "A crown of olive." "Heavens!" cried a cousin of the king, "what kind of men have we come to do battle with? — men who contend not for gain, but for glory!" We have seen that substantial rewards

* Ol. v. 4.

were sometimes bestowed by Greek cities on their victorious citizens, but glory was in truth the conqueror's most sufficient and usually his only recompense. Crowned with his olive, and escorted by his rejoicing friends, who chanted usually as they went the time-honoured verses of Archilochus,—preluding, as it were, the hymns in which living poets would soon be called upon to celebrate the triumph—

"Archilochus's threefold lay,
In Olympia sounded forth, the swelling triumph-song,"*—

the victor passed by the hill of Cronius, offered his sacrifices and thanksgivings to Olympian Zeus, and returned to banquet with his friends, and listen to the joyous strains, lasting far into the night, in which the "Comus" or chorus of revellers

"Fought all his battles o'er again."

His return to his native city was a repetition of his triumph. The whole town poured out to meet him. Ælian, in one of his lively little anecdotes, describes the triumphal progress into Athens of the returned Olympian victor Dioxippus. The champion drives into the city, "as is customary with the athletes." The crowds come flocking together,—"from this side and from that, folks joined the procession and gazed upon the sight." Among the rest, braving the oriental prejudices which, as a rule, kept Greek women secluded within the precincts of the Gynæceum or Harem, comes a lady of surpassing beauty—such beauty that

* Ol. ix. 1.

the haughty hero starts, flushes, and again grows pale, turns to look, and remains transfixed, forgetful of himself, of the crowd, of everything but his charmer. The spectators exchange meaning glances, and the old cynic Diogenes of Sinope growls out a jest at the expense of "your mighty athlete," who has met his match in "a chit of a girl!" *

Further commemorations of his triumph yet awaited the returned conqueror. The tutelar deities of his city were still to be thanked for the favour to which his piety attributed some portion at least of his success. And by this time the poet, who had been commissioned to prepare a worthier record of the victory than the antiquated hymn of Archilochus, had prepared his ode and trained his chorus. Again, then, the victor and his friends visited in proud procession the altars of his religion, and again his exploits were chanted in notes of solemn joy. Nor was this the end. At family festivals, for years to come, the tale of triumph was told again. And if, in course of time, the victor rose to positions of dignity and power in his native state, the hymns which accompanied his installation dwelt once more on his athletic successes. Many of Pindar's Odes were composed and performed long after the victories they celebrate. And his poem † for the installation of Aristagoras as chief magistrate of Tenedos owes its preservation to the numerous records which it contains of his victories in youthful competitions, and which led the grammarians of Alexandria to class it, wrongly yet fortunately, among the Nemean Odes.

* Var. Hist. xii. 58. † Nem. xi.

The special features in which the other great games differed from those of Olympia need not detain us long. The Pythian contests were held in the plains of Crissa, under the shadow of the towering crag of Delphi, the centre or "navel" of earth, as Greek poets described it. Here was the world-renowned temple and oracle of Apollo, the especial god of the Dorian race, and the patron of music and the arts. This fact may serve to explain the chief peculiarity of the Pythian games, the musical and poetical contests, which here accompanied the equestrian and gymnastic competitions. A single Ode of Pindar's recalls this feature in the games of Pytho,—that in which he commemorates the victory of the Agrigentine Midas, victor in the competition of flute-players. Its brevity renders it suitable for quotation, and it introduces the remarkable legend of the invention of the flute, suggested to Athene (as tradition told) by the dying shrieks of the Gorgon! For the credit of Greek music, we must hope that the inventress improved upon her model, or that Midas's performance had not too slavishly reproduced it.

PYTHIAN XII.

TO MIDAS OF ACRAGAS, WINNER OF THE PRIZE FOR FLUTE-PLAYING.

Strophe.

"I pray thee, Queen of splendour, city of peerless grace,
Persephone's home; O thou, that on thy tower-clad hill

Dwellest, fair Queen, beside the streams of pastoral
Acragas!
Propitious greet, with favour of Heaven and man's good-
will,
The crown, at Pytho's festival that glorious Midas won;
And welcome him, victorious in that fair art,—of old
That Pallas found, when wailed the Gorgons bold,
And she to music wove their dismal moan.

Antistrophe.

For maiden-shrieks and hiss of horrible snakes she
heard,
Forth flowing in plaintive strain with weary anguish
fraught;
What time as Perseus did to death that sister-triad's
third,
And ruin to the hosts of Seriphos' island brought;
And blindness therewithal he poured on Phorcus' im-
mortal race;
And Polydectes rued the gift, the son of Danae gave
To him, perforce that made her wife and slave;
When headless lay Medusa fair of face,

Strophe.

Slain by the hero, sprung, they say, from a golden rain!
But, when from his peril she had saved her champion dear,
Maiden Athene fashioned then the flute with its varied
strain,
To echo back the wailing that smote upon her ear,
As clamorously forth from fell Euryale's maw it came.
So found the goddess,—and forthwith on mortal man
bestowed,
And named the strain her 'many-headed mode;'
Memorial fair of each frequented game!

Antistrophe.

Through slender brass it flows ; through many a reeden quill,
That grew by the Graces' town for choral dance renowned,
In nymph Cephisis' hallowed haunts ; true witness of dancers' skill!
Ne'er, save by toiling, mortal aught of bliss hath found ;
But all that lacks, in one brief day, can Destiny's power supply.
What fate ordains may none avoid : needs must a day befall
Of chances unforeseen, that, maugre all
Man's scheming, part will grant and part deny!"

The poem has no Epodes, showing that it was intended to be sung by a procession without the usual halts. The prize of the Pythia was a crown of laurel, the especial emblem of Apollo, recalling the legend so beautifully told by Wordsworth :—

"'Tis sung in ancient minstrelsy,
That Phœbus wont to wear
The leaves of any pleasant tree
Around his golden hair;
Till Daphne, desperate with pursuit
Of his imperious love,
At her own prayer transformed took root,
A laurel in the grove.

Then did the Penitent adorn
His brow with laurel green;
And 'mid his bright locks, never shorn,
No meaner leaf was seen;

And poets sage, through every age,
About their temples wound
The bay; and conquerors thanked the gods,
With laurel chaplets crowned."

The Nemean festival was held every other year in a glen or plateau surrounded by the mountains of Argolis—"bleak, grey, barren hills, worn by the winter torrents into a thousand furrows"*—a very different scene from the groves and tufted hills of Olympia. Rivulets without number course down the hills, and fall into the river Nemea. The most prominent feature in the landscape must always have been the singular "table-mountain" now known as Mount Phouka, a huge pyramidal mass, truncated, yet still overtopping all the surrounding heights. Of this mountain, however, Pindar tells us nothing. The legends of Nemea seem to impress him more than its scenery, though he notices the glen bosomed deep in hills, and its wealth of streams and water-courses. Amid the heath and grasses of this glen had ranged, in the old heroic days, the fearful lion of Nemea, slain at last by Heracles, and furnishing him with the lion-skin which was his traditional costume. The "glen," or the "brake of the lion," is Pindar's favourite periphrasis for Nemea. Its sports were frequented, it would seem, especially by athletes from the neighbouring island of Ægina. A voyage of from one to two hours in fair weather would bring them to the port of Epidaurus, and thence by a steep ascent they climbed to the scene of the contests. Six out of the eight

* Clark's Peloponnesus, p. 65.

Odes which Pindar devotes to victories at Nemea, describe the successes of Æginetan champions. There are eleven so-called Nemean Odes, but two refer to victories gained in other contests, and one (as we have seen) is an Installation-ode, improperly classed among the Epinicia. Neither olive nor laurel graced the stadium of Nemea. There was, indeed, a grove of sacred cypresses round the temple of Nemean Zeus, three of whose singularly lofty Doric columns still remain as a puzzle to archæologists. But the victor's crown was not gathered from these ill-omened trees. It was supplied by the wild parsley, which still abounds in the locality.

The last of the four great games were the Isthmia, celebrated in alternate years with the Nemea, on the "sea-severing ridge" * of the Corinthian Isthmus, and appropriately dedicated to the sea-god Poseidon. The site of his temple is believed to be still marked by some very ancient Doric and Ionic ruined columns, "akin," as a modern traveller tells us, "rather to old Sicilian than to Attic or Æginetan architecture." The wreath was of pine, according to most authorities; yet here, too, as at Nemea, the victors in the chariot-race seem to have been sometimes at least crowned with parsley.† To this crown, whether of pine or parsley, St Paul refers, as is well known, when he reminds the Corinthians of the exertions of athletes in those Isthmian contests, at which some of his hearers may have themselves competed, and which all must have often witnessed. "Now they do it to

* Isthm. i. 9. † ib. ii. 16.

obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." May not some recollection of these, his own words, have lived still in his mind when he wrote from Rome to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight;" or more literally, "I have striven in the glorious contest, I have finished the race; . . . henceforth there is laid up for me the wreath of righteousness, which the Lord, the just judge, will award me in that day"?

CHAPTER V.

CLASSIFICATION OF PINDAR'S ODES.—HIS TREATMENT OF THE MYTHS.

THE traditional arrangement of Pindar's poems is ascribed to the famous Alexandrian grammarian Aristophanes—not, of course, to be confounded with his namesake, the more famous Athenian playwright—who flourished in the third century B.C. By this critic the whole of the poet's writings were divided into a series of Books,—Dithyrambs in one, Dirges in another, and so forth, the list being headed by the four Books of Epinicia or Triumph-Odes commemorating respectively victories at Olympia, Pytho, Nemea, and the Isthmus. A complete modern edition of Pindar's extant poetry would contain the first three Books of Aristophanes's collection entire; but the conclusion of his fourth Book, "The Isthmia," has been lost, and the remaining books are only represented by fragments accidentally preserved to us by quotations. Whenever an ancient author quotes from an Olympian, a Pythian, or a Nemean Ode, the passage which he cites will be found in our editions of Pindar, but there are several ancient quotations of Isthmian Odes which

are not included in the extant seven. Thus it will be seen that the manuscripts on which our editions are founded contained the first three Books, and a portion of the fourth, of Aristophanes's collection.

The several Odes of these four Books were arranged by Aristophanes according to their *occasions*, not chronologically—for Pindar's earliest extant Ode is the Tenth Pythian, his next the Sixth Pythian, and his latest the Fifth Olympian,—but so that (as a rule) poems commemorating chariot-victories should begin a Book, these being followed by Odes for feats of strength, as boxing and wrestling; and lastly, by those recording the victories of speed in the "stadium" and "diaulus" or "long-race" (literally "double-course"). As a rule, also, the successes of grown men, in any species of competition, precede those of boys in the corresponding juvenile matches. The classification also involved sundry other minute considerations as to the relative dignity of different competitions into which we need not enter, the more so as Aristophanes does not seem to have always carried out his own principles with absolute precision. The First Olympian Ode, "For Hiero of Syracuse, victor in the Horse-race," owes its precedence to the legends contained in it, the adventures of Pelops, from whom the Morea (as we call it) was supposed to have derived its classical name—"The Isle of Pelops," the "Peloponnesus;" and whose race on the plains of Elis to win his bride Hippodameia was regarded as a prototype of the Olympian contests of a later day.

But the received classification has many disad-

vantages. The titles of the four Books give a very inadequate idea of their contents. As we have seen, the actual *occasion* of an Ode is one thing, its real theme is frequently another. A modern reader, again, will care little for the distinctions, which to a Greek seemed so important, of chariot-race, mile-race, wrestling-match, and the like, and will wish for some classification less dependent on what he will regard as insignificant accidents of the particular Odes. Something might be said for chronology as the basis of such a classification. There would be a certain interest in attempting to trace the development and decline of Pindar's genius through the fifty years which separate his earliest from his latest Ode. Yet the results of such an attempt would probably be inconsiderable. We may, indeed, distinguish certain variations of *force* in Pindar's poetry at the various stages of its development, but there is no marked change in its general *character* from time to time; none in its choice of themes; scarcely any in its method of handling them. His general conception of the proper form of an Ode seems to have been fixed during the period of his early education, his "Lehr-jähre" under Scopelinus and Lasus, and no subsequent influences can be shown to have substantially modified it. Thus a classification of his Odes based on chronology would be unsatisfactory, from the absence of sufficiently marked epochs.*

* This, however, is the method adopted by Leop. Schmidt in his elaborate work, Pindar's Leben und Dichtung (Bonn, 1862).

More perhaps may be gained by grouping the Odes, not according to their nominal occasions, but according to their actual contents: the legendary matter, which, as has been already explained, should be considered as the true fount and source of Pindaric poetry. Adopting this as our general principle, we shall be enabled at the same time to classify the Odes according to the nationality of the respective conquerors whom they commemorate; for, as we have seen, much of a choric poet's skill depended on a happy selection from the boundless stores of mythology of those legends which were best calculated to gratify the family or national pride of a patron. Thus we shall find the Odes in honour of Æginetan victors dealing almost exclusively with the legends of the Æacidæ, the old heroic house which once ruled in Ægina. Similarly, to Rhodian and Cyrenaic athletes Pindar sings chiefly of the mythical origin of their respective states. The victory of a Theban, again, suggests to the poet a flood of local legends, Heracles and Iolaus, the wars of the "Seven against Thebes," and their descendants the "Epigoni." Such a classification, then, will enable us at once to reduce the tangled mass of Pindaric poetry into intelligible divisions, and to follow in some measure the workings of the poet's mind, as he endeavours to connect the nominal occasion of each Ode with that mythological world from which in each case he draws his loftiest inspirations.

Nearly, but not quite always, modern scholars are able to detect with certainty the connection between the occasion of a Pindaric Ode and the myths which are

employed to adorn it. It is conceivable that a fuller knowledge than is now possible of the antiquities of Greece, the genealogies of the great families in various cities, and the legends attaching to them, would enable us to prove in every case the assertion of A. Boeckh, the prince of Pindaric scholars, that Pindar *never* introduces a myth without the direct intention of complimenting his patron. And as we have seen, it is nearly always through his family, or his nation, that the patron is complimented. Yet there are cases in which a legend, connected though it be especially with the conqueror's family history or with that of his state, is yet clearly introduced with other more obvious objects than the gratification of family or national pride. At times we find mythology employed to point a moral lesson, or to illustrate vicissitudes in the career of a victor, to soften the memory of old defeats, to encourage him to fresh exertions, and generally to exhibit in an attractive form those various precepts, warnings, and maxims, which the poet—in his capacity of philosopher and moralist—pours from time to time into the ears of his audience. Sometimes, again, it is the *locale* of a contest, rather than the family or country of the victor, with which the mythical matter of an Ode seems most obviously connected. No doubt it may be said that here, too, if we only knew how, a connection might be shown between the victor's personal surroundings and the myth. But, inasmuch as this phenomenon appears mainly in Odes addressed to conquerors of comparatively undistinguished origin—or at least whose family

distinctions were of comparatively recent date — it seems more probable that, in these cases, the poet purposely avoided the futile flattery of dwelling on imaginary heroic glories of a *parvenu* house or state, and deliberately fixed the attention of his audience on its real though recent achievements, summoning for the adornment of these achievements all the old heroic associations of the locality in which the triumphs had been won. And this is probably the reason why the local legends of Olympia figure so much more prominently in Pindar's poetry than those of Pytho, Nemea, or the Isthmus. For a large proportion of the Olympian Odes are dedicated to members of Sicilian royal houses, whose position had been won merely by force of arms at a comparatively recent date, and whose family traditions, whatever they may have been, were totally insignificant when compared with their subsequently acquired greatness. Whereas the successes of Æginetans (let us say) at Nemea and the Isthmus, or of the ancient Cyrenaic princely houses at Pytho, glorious as in themselves they were esteemed to be, formed simply an episode in the splendid annals of Ægina and Cyrenè. So that it was to these latter, and not to the associations of the contests themselves, that the poet directed the attention of his audience.

Speaking generally, it may be said that Pindar's introductions of mythology serve four most obvious purposes: (1) The glorification of a victor's nation or family; (2) The illustration of special points in his personal surroundings, or career, or character; (3) The direction of special attention to the glories of a victory,

by dwelling on the divine institution of a contest, the dignity of the gods who preside over it, and the various traditional associations which consecrate its scene; (4) The supporting, by arguments drawn from a divine antiquity, of *theses*, moral, political, and philosophical, which the poet desired from time to time to propound and justify. Sometimes, by a happy selection of his instances, the poet is able to serve several, or even all, of these purposes at once. But any one of them seems a sufficient reason for the introduction of a myth. And where such a sufficient reason can be shown, it seems hypercritical, if not unreasonable, to insist too strongly on trifling indications of a possibility that the poet may have had other motives in introducing it.

The transitions by which Pindar passes from his nominal to his real themes, from the commemoration of a victory to the world of legend in which he best loves to dwell, are among the most extraordinary features of his poetry. No *à priori* considerations of the manner in which such transitions might be expected to be made will give the most remote conception of the manner in which they actually are made. Instantly, unexpectedly, at a leap, he plunges from the present to the past, and from the past to the present—from fact to fiction, and from fiction back again to fact. The apparently casual mention of a place or a person is followed by a long mythological episode, to all appearance a mere digression, but which on reflection is found to be adapted with surprising skill to the main purposes of the Ode. But this is not all. The legend introduced so strangely is often as strangely

abandoned. It has served the immediate purpose for which it was introduced, and the poet springs at once to another theme. Often, too, a poem contains not one myth, but many, and these are interwoven with one another and with the other materials of the Ode in the most singular, and at first sight unintelligible, fashion. One legend passes into another, like the stories of the 'Arabian Nights;' the scene shifts from Troy to Salamis, and from Salamis to Thessaly; and from the adventures of the successive inhabitants of Rhodes, we are flung centuries back into an age when not as yet—

"Towered the Rhodian isle conspicuous over Ocean's waves, but still
Deep it lay beneath the whelming brine." *

Or the "tale of Troy" has been referred to,† and we are expecting to hear some well-known feat of Achilles or Ajax; but no! it is "the form of Lycian Glaucus" who appears before the Greeks, and "tells them all with pride" of his Corinthian ancestry; and so follows legend after legend of the Corinthian hero Bellerophon, apparently introduced "without rhyme or reason," but really the very legends which Pindar had all along been preparing to introduce, in honour of the Corinthian athlete whose victory he is at the moment celebrating.

Sometimes the only visible link between a myth and the context to which it is attached is so transparently inadequate to bear the weight laid upon it, as almost to suggest the idea that the poet is purposely playing with his subject. Thus in the First Isthmian,

* Ol. vii. 56. † ib. xiii.

addressed to Herodotus of Thebes, the poet introduces an allusion to the technical name of sundry musical rhythms which he is employing, and plunges off on this excuse into the legends of Castor and Iolaus, the mythical heroes from whom the names of these measures were derived. But let it not be supposed that the introduction of these heroes, and the description of their friendly rivalry in feats of arms—Castor in Sparta on the banks of Eurotas, and Iolaus by the waters of his native Theban Dirce — is really due to so absurd a cause. Pindar's true object is at once to honour his countryman, Herodotus, by suggesting a comparison between him and the local hero Iolaus, and to shadow forth, in the legendary brotherhood-in-arms of Iolaus and the Spartan hero Castor, a close alliance now in process of formation between Thebes and Sparta, from which great things were expected, and of which Herodotus may not improbably have been a prominent adviser.

Again, in the Ninth Pythian, the poet affects to check himself in a too exuberant flow of myth and compliment, with a quotation of the somewhat hackneyed maxim, that "measure in all things is best." And thereupon he begins a story of Iolaus, apparently with no further justification than his opening remark, that "Iolaus knew the importance of measure." But, in truth, he wished to dwell upon the ties connecting Cyrene (the victor's native state) with Thebes (the home of Iolaus); and it is this, and not the shaky bridge by which he pretends to cross to his new topic, that really leads him to the legend of Iolaus.

In the Tenth Pythian, Pindar has been saying that a man who is at once a conqueror and the father of a conqueror has attained the summit of human happiness. What matters it, he cries, that there are further heights which he can never scale; that he cannot climb the brazen heaven, or reach the Paradise beyond the pole, the happy country of the Hyperboreans? And then he tells the legend of the hero Perseus, who had found the wondrous way to that mysterious region. No digression could seem more uncalled for; yet Boeckh suggests reasons for believing that the legends of Perseus had a special interest for the family of the Thessalian noble at whose request the poem was written. The pretended link again is a deception. The real occasion for the introduction of the myth is the family history of the patron.

Yet again, in the Eleventh Pythian, Pindar has occasion to tell the famous tale of Agamemnon's murder by his wife, probably, as Boeckh argues at length, in connection with a misfortune which had befallen the victor's family. But how does he introduce it? Does he condole plainly with his patron, and pass by obvious steps to compare the present disaster with its legendary parallel? Far from it. Pindar disdains to tread such "beaten paths."

> "Learnt have I shorter paths, and others have in them led." *

His patron had conquered at Pytho—Pytho had once been ruled by Pylades — Pylades was the bosom

* Pyth. iv. 248.

friend of Orestes—Orestes was the son and avenger of Agamemnon. So at last his theme is reached. And thus, to quote Pindar's own description of his poetry—

"From theme to theme, the bright applausive lay,
As bees from flower to flower, speeds on its changeful way." *

This singular habit of Pindar's is a constant source of bewilderment to his modern readers, and, more than any other feature in his poetry, justifies the charge of obscurity which is so frequently brought against him. No poet can tell a story more plainly and pointedly than he, when it suits him to be plain and pointed. No poet could exhibit more skill in selecting from a mass of legendary memories the precise story which best suits his purpose on each occasion. But he chooses deliberately to approach his myths in this unexpected style. It is in his eyes a merit—an exhibition of skill. Often he professes to apologise for his digressions, as he chooses to call these carefully-planned episodes, which are the real centres—the very groundwork of his Odes. He speaks of himself as driven unexpectedly upon his themes by such winds as toss the skiffs at sea. He calls to his Muse to stay the oar, and cast the anchor from the prow, ere he strike upon some lurking rock. But such language is merely intended to heighten the illusion which he has designedly produced, to give his carefully-elaborated poem the air of an improvisation. Few poets

* Pyth. x. 53.

have more consistently applied the maxim, "*Ars est celare artem.*"

Connected with this peculiarity of Pindar's is another, the practice of continually alluding to myths without working out their incidents. Thus he delays the development of his main legend to touch by the way on a dozen others; or he begins a story, and then drops it with some allusion to the necessary limits of his Ode, or even with no excuse at all. Sometimes, before commencing his real theme, he affects to hesitate in his choice of a subject—he speaks like the victim of an *embarras de richesse.* "There is *this* story before me, and *that*, and *that*—which am I to choose?"

> "Whither then down the torrent's flow
> Our swift stone speed we?" *

Modern readers, who find in these passages only obscure allusions to tales of which they know little, may well complain of them as needless additions to the already sufficient difficulties of Pindar's poetry. They will naturally consider that a story which is worth mentioning is worth telling, and be repelled by the seemingly exorbitant demands which Pindar makes on the mythological knowledge of his readers. But we must remember the audiences whom the poet in the first instance addressed. The ancient legends of their houses were to them no mystery to be unravelled by commentators. Every slight allusion of the Ode recalled to them some glorious tradition, some hero of

* Ol. xi. 9.

whom they had long been proud, and whose achievements it would be needless for the poet to narrate. And this very knowledge of his audience is made by Pindar a ground for complimenting them. He has an endless store of such glorious allusions, he tells them, —the wise grasp their sense at once, but to the uninitiated they remain a blank perplexity.

> "Oh mine are keen shafts many a one
> Within the quiver stored:
> Of meaning to the wise, but to the horde
> Dark riddles!" *

To some extent Pindar has paid the penalty for his imperious scorn of the uninitiated "horde," and has sacrificed, for the applauses of his immediate audience, the chance of a wider popularity.

Sometimes, in passing from the occasion of an Ode to his favourite legends, Pindar seems to scorn the employment of any bridge whatever. Of this a good instance will be found in the First Nemean, addressed to Chromius of Ætna. Chromius, he says,† is at once strong and wise, and on such a patron he would fain lavish all the best stores of his poetry. He is no miser to hoard its treasures for himself; no! let him pour them on Chromius, and win his gratitude in return.

> "But, when I fain would wake
> Some old heroic lay,
> Whose but Herakles' noble name
> Should deck the exulting verse for thy dear sake?"—(S).

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* Ol. ii. 83. † Nem. i. 30.

And the name of the famous hero having been thus introduced, the whole legend of his early life follows, from his adventure with the snakes in his cradle, to his final apotheosis, and marriage with Hebe. Now, when we examine the link by which this story is introduced, stripping away its poetical surroundings, it is simply this: "Chromius deserves a noble legend; I will tell him, therefore, the legend of Heracles." But why should Heracles especially be fixed upon? The pretended bridge breaks down at once, or rather it is no bridge at all, and we have to seek the occasion for the myth in the connection between the exploits of Heracles and Nemea, the scene of Chromius's victory.

An interesting question which presents itself in connection with Pindar's employment of myths is this: How far did he permit himself to innovate upon received traditions? Was his treatment of them orthodox, according to the ideas of his age, or was he a religious reformer? Philosophy, in his day, had already begun a more or less successful revolt against large bodies of popular mythology. Xenophanes, older than Pindar by at least a generation, had ventured to attack the almost sacred books of Homer and Hesiod on the ground of immorality. "Homer and Hesiod," he had said in some still extant verses, "ascribed to the gods all qualities which among men are grounds for shame and reproach,—theft, adultery, and reciprocal fraud." Protagoras, almost coeval with Pindar, questioned the very existence of gods. And before our poet's death, Euripides had already begun to bring out at Athens

dramas in which the old mythology was varied with the utmost freedom for poetical purposes, and occasionally criticised from a point of view scarcely distinguishable from that of the most pronounced sceptic. Against this innovating movement Greek conservatism protested loudly. Poets of the ancient school denounced the speculation which had produced such results—"the yelping cur that barked against its master." Did Pindar share the new ideas, or did he protest against them? Or did he, like Aristophanes in a later age, while protesting against them, exhibit in his own writings signs of their influence?

It might seem, at first sight, as if this last were the true answer to our question. For while in Pindar's earliest Ode we find him assuming an attitude of unquestioning belief towards the myths—

> "Mine be it, ne'er at feats that heavenly Powers achieve
> To marvel, but believe!" *

—in his later compositions he more than once expresses disapproval of some myth on which he has touched, and either remodels it openly, according to his sense of right, or hastens to quit the unwelcome subject. So, in the First Olympian, he is shocked at an incident in the myth of Pelops,—the story that he was boiled and eaten by the gods. "I will not repeat such a scandal," he cries—"I dare not! Tax the blessed gods with gluttony? oh, horrible!" And then, attributing the horrid tale to some "envious gossip's dark hints," he goes on to give a new version

* Pyth. x. 49.

of the occurrence, for which he accepts the full responsibility.

"Newly thus, O son of Tantalus, I'll shape thy tale," &c.*

And in the Ninth Ode of the same Book, following an ancient myth, he finds himself describing a war between Heracles and certain other great gods — Poseidon, Apollo, and Hades. At once he starts back in horror:†—

"Nay, quit such theme of song,
Tongue mine! The craft that dares with impious taunts
Assail the gods, I loathe: and misplaced vaunts
Are songs for a madman's string!
Prate not thus: but from the gods sweep far the tale of fight!"

And therewith he passes instantly to a less dangerous subject, the legend of Deucalion's deluge.

But, if we regard Pindar's poetry as a whole, we shall scarcely be inclined to accept the view of the German critic, Dronke, who, on the strength of these occasional indications, describes the poet as deliberately deserting the old paths, and paving the way for a more spiritual religion by rejecting the authority of the myths. Pindar's criticisms are directed solely against details: anything like a systematic crusade against the old beliefs as a whole, had it occurred to him as practicable, would certainly have been condemned by him as an impiety. His occasional polemics against particular forms of an ancient legend are not enough to stamp him as a sceptic. Some degree

* Ol. i. 36. † ib. ix. 36.

of licence in the handling of mythology had always been allowed to poets, even in the days when the faith of Greeks in their traditions was most childlike and unquestioning. Homer and Hesiod do not always agree in their accounts of the same transaction. When Pindar refuses * to tell the story of Bellerophon's sad fate—his final fall from the winged steed Pegasus—he does not attempt to enlist his Corinthian hearers on the side of scepticism by an outspoken condemnation of the legend which bore so hard upon their favourite local hero. He simply leaves it untold, and passes to a more pleasing topic—the reception of the winged steed in the stalls of Zeus. But, when he tells the same legend to a Theban audience,† in whom the fate of the Corinthian hero would excite no special feeling of regret or wounded pride, he no longer shrinks from describing and justifying the catastrophe.

"So the winged steed the audacious horseman threw,
Who hoped the brazen halls of Zeus to view,
Impious Bellerophon! a bitter end,
When man unholy joys hath seized,
Be sure, offended Heaven will send."—(S.)

A poet with Pindar's lofty views as to the nature of divine beings, and his genuine enthusiasm for morality as he conceived it, could not but be struck from time to time with the inconsistencies and ethical shortcomings of his legendary materials, the unseemly acts and attributes ascribed to heroes and even to gods. Yet it is but seldom that he breaks out into open revolt. He omits, he deplores, he palliates, he justifies, he moralises, but

* Ol. xiii. 91. † Isthm. vi. 44.

he scarcely ever discards. As he relates the myth of Apollo and Cyrenè, it strikes him as absurd to suppose that the god who sees and knows all things should have to apply for information and advice to the Centaur Chiron :—

"Hast *thou* yon maiden's race inquired,
O King? that knowest the final destinies
And paths of each created thing.
What leaves from earth outburst in days of spring,
What sands are tost in sea or rill,
By waves or eddying winds, and what must needs befall,
And whence,—thou knowest all!" *

And yet to ascribe hypocrisy to Apollo, the god of Truth, would be as impious as to accuse him of ignorance. And so—unwilling to deny the legend of the god's appeal to Chiron, yet feeling himself compelled either to deny or to justify it—he represents the question as asked in jest :—

"Sure—for from thee all falsehood flies—
Some sportive mood thy speech inspires!"

In the same spirit of an apologist, rather than an opponent of tradition, he moralises over the disobedience of the early Rhodian settlers. Apollo bade them kindle a hallowed fire in their city's temple; they disobeyed the order, and yet the favour of Heaven attended them,—

"Yet rained Zeus upon their people plenteous showers of gleaming gold."†

* Pyth. ix. 42. † Ol. vii. 50.

This oversight of the original myth Pindar is at pains to excuse and explain. The disobedience was due to forgetfulness, a frailty which at times besets the best of men, and for which a just Heaven knows how to make allowance. Thus the apparent sanction given by the myth to disobedience is removed, and the myth itself justified and retained.

Lastly, in describing the fate of the hero Asclepius, (more familiar, perhaps, to English readers as the Æsculapius of Roman mythology), who was struck by the lightnings of Zeus as the penalty for restoring a dead man to life, Pindar never thinks of attacking this myth, as a sceptical enthusiast might well have done, for the unworthy view which it presents of the father of gods and men, as a jealous and vindictive tyrant, grudging men an unexpected blessing, and revenging himself upon their benefactor. He prefers to attack the cupidity of Asclepius, and the vain attempt of man to transcend the laws of his being. Yet cupidity in a deified hero is a defect which needs palliation from the apologist for the myths; and so he dwells on the power of gold, against which not Wisdom's self is proof. Thus the fate of Asclepius was just, and yet his fault was not such as to invalidate his title to the honours of a hero.

Pindar, then, though attacking individual myths, must be pronounced guiltless of any intention to subvert the popular mythology. His general position is well exhibited in the special instance of his attitude towards the writings of Homer. It is an attitude, on the whole, of belief and even of reverence. He

admires Homer, he accepts his legends, he often embodies them in his work, he quotes his sentiments, and appeals to them as a modern divine would appeal to the words of Scripture. And yet he does not shrink from an occasional rejection of the authority of his oracle. He is willing to believe that Homer gave Ulysses more and Ajax less than his due. But while he exposes this unfairness, he pays a tribute to Homer's powers, designed, as it were, to rob his criticisms of their sting.

"Far greater than his meeds, I ween,
Ulysses' praise hath been,
In Homer's sweet immortal verse enshrined.
For in that verse that soars on wings doth dwell
A wondrous art of secret spell,
Throwing a haze of seeming sooth
On fair untruth;
While by the spell bewitched and blind
Is the rapt hearer's ear and mazed mind,
The hidden truth to find." *—(S.)

This attitude of Pindar towards the traditions of Greek religion—an attitude of occasional criticism, but hardly ever of actual revolt—finds a close parallel in that of his great contemporary, the Athenian Æschylus. The latter, also, though in his general tone a conservative of the conservatives, deeply and sincerely attached to the national religion, can yet at times use language which would have seemed at first sight more natural in the mouth of an Euripides. He rejects the ancient "grandsire tales" that human prosperity, as such, is the

* Nem vii. 20.

object of divine jealousy, and declares that, sundering himself from the rest, he is single in *his* creed *—it is crime and not prosperity that provokes the wrath of Heaven. Yet he nowhere assumes a position of consistent scepticism. He does not shrink from following the old legend of Prometheus's sufferings, even when it exhibits in the darkest colours the paltry malevolence of Zeus. And yet he elsewhere speaks of Zeus with the profoundest reverence and the most unflinching loyalty. "Zeus, great Zeus, the stranger's god, I reverence!" † "No other power I know to compare with him." ‡

> "He who swells to Zeus the triumph-strain
> All of wisdom shall obtain." §

In short, such quasi-scepticism as is exhibited from time to time by Pindar and Æschylus has in it little or nothing of the sceptical spirit. It is the occasional protest of a religious and earnest nature against the inadequacies of its creed, but it does not go the length of consistently reforming that creed, much less of uncompromisingly rejecting it.

* Æsch. Agam. 730. † ib. 351.
‡ ib. 158. § ib. 167 (Conington's translation).

CHAPTER VI.

SICILY.—THE LEGENDS OF OLYMPIA.

It has already been stated that the received classification of Pindar's Odes into the four groups of Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian, gives us little clue to the contents of any particular Ode. Yet the Nemean group, if we exclude from it those Odes which have been wrongly reckoned by grammarians as Nemean—the Ninth, the Tenth, and the Eleventh—exhibits a certain unity of subject. For out of the eight remaining Odes six are devoted to victories of Æginetan athletes, and are mainly occupied with legends of the Æginetan hero Æacus and his family; while a seventh, though written for a Sicilian, dwells chiefly on the tale of Heracles, the friend and comrade of Æacus. In the Isthmian group also, two closely connected sets of legends predominate, the legends of Thebes and Ægina,—sister-states, according to Greek tradition, deriving their origin respectively from Thebe and Ægina, the daughters of Asopus. Seven Isthmian Odes are all that now remain from the original collection of Aristophanes. Three are addressed to Thebans, three to Æginetans, one to a Sicilian (and

in this last the mythical element is insignificant). No such unity can be said to characterise the Olympian or the Pythian group. In each of these, however, a particular series of legends stands prominently forward in neither case, indeed, occupying the whole or nearly the whole of the book, but in each case extending through several Odes of exceptional beauty and importance, and so forming a marked and salient feature. In the Olympian Odes, this prominence belongs to the local legends of Olympia; in the Pythian, to those of the distant colony Cyrenè, and its ruling family the Battiadæ. The legends of Olympia take up three out of the fourteen Olympian Odes, and each of these three is addressed to a victor from the western colonies of Greece in Italy and Sicily. We have already suggested a reason for this circumstance. The great houses of Sicily were greater in the present than in the past, and the poet may probably have felt that, in dwelling upon their magnificent present position and calling attention to the glorious associations of their Olympian victories, he was paying them a more welcome as well as a more sincere compliment, than he could have done by referring to family or national antecedents, which had been eclipsed by more recent glories. Still we must not suppose that all allusion to ancestral legends is excluded from the Odes addressed to Sicilians. The Second Olympian Ode, addressed to Thero of Acragas, or Agrigentum, traces the victor's family back to the great mythical house of the Theban Labdacidæ, and illustrates the vicissitudes of its history by parallels

drawn from the varied fortunes of its heroic ancestors. But this is the exception. As a rule, in all the Odes addressed to Sicilian or Italian Greeks, the mythical element is introduced either in connection with the locality or other circumstances of the triumph (Ol. i. iii. iv. xi.; Pyth. xii., and perhaps Nem. i.), or with the personal surroundings or character of the victor (Pyth. i. ii. iii. vi.; Nem. ix.), or is practically absent altogether (Ol. v. x. xii., all very short Odes; Isthm. ii.) The only exceptions are the Ode to Thero already mentioned (Ol. ii.), and the Ode (Ol. vi.) to Agesias of Syracuse, a member of a sacerdotal house, whose peculiar privileges recalled, almost of course, the legend of their supposed ancestor Iamus, and thus enabled Pindar to grace his poem with one of the most exquisite tales in Greek mythology.

Pindar's chief Sicilian patrons belonged to the royal families of Syracuse and Acragas. The regal honours of these families had not been long achieved. About the time of Pindar's boyish studies in Athens, a certain Cleander, despot of Gela in Sicily, had in his army two captains of some distinction, Gelo and Ænesidamus. Cleander was succeeded by a brother, who fell in battle; and Gelo, after some pretence of establishing the late king's sons in their father's place, ultimately succeeded in securing it for himself. Gelo was one of four brothers, the "sons of Deinomenes," and when in B.C. 485 he transferred the seat of his empire from Gela to Syracuse, his brother Hiero succeeded him at Gela. Five years later (B.C. 480) a magnificent victory over the Carthaginians at Himera, coinciding

in date with the yet more momentous success of the Greeks over the Persians at Salamis, raised the house of Deinomenes to a height of power at home and consideration abroad that had been attained by no previous Sicilian dynasty. The honours and results of this victory were shared by Thero (a son of Gelo's old comrade Ænesidamus), whom we now find established—how, we know not—as despot of Agrigentum. In two years more Gelo was dead, and Hiero succeeded to the whole of his dominions.

Thero and Hiero, representatives of the two old comrades Gelo and Ænesidamus, reigned pretty peaceably side by side, in Agrigentum and Syracuse respectively, till the death of Thero. At one time a conflict between them seemed imminent, but the danger was averted, and the credit of effecting a reconciliation is ascribed,* but on insufficient authority, to Pindar's rival-poet, Simonides. The son and successor, however, of Thero was overthrown by Hiero, who thus became to all intents and purposes supreme in Sicily. Syracuse remained his capital, but he founded also a city called Ætna, from its vicinity to the mountain of that name, and set up in it, as rulers, his son Deinomenes and his friend Chromius, either in conjunction or in succession. Further, on winning a chariot-victory at Pytho, he complimented his new city by associating its name, and not that of Syracuse, with his own, in the customary proclamation of the victor's father and native state.

After the fall of the Theronian dynasty in Agri-

* Scholiast on Pindar, Ol. ii. 29.

gentum, two members at least of the deposed family seem to have remained as private persons in that city. These were Xenocrates* (a brother of Thero) and his son Thrasybulus. Hiero had married a daughter of Xenocrates, and this may, perhaps, explain the circumstance that they were willing to remain at home in their altered position, and that Hiero permitted them to do so.

Hiero died in B.C. 467, the fifty-fifth year of Pindar's life; and in two years more his dynasty was overthrown, and his kingdom broken up.

Of the persons mentioned in the above brief sketch, Thero, Hiero, Chromius, Xenocrates, and Thrasybulus were patrons of Pindar. For Thero he wrote two Odes (Ol. ii. iii.), for Hiero four (Ol., i.; Pyth. i. ii. iii.), for Chromius two (Nem. i. ix.), for Xenocrates and Thrasybulus two (Pyth. vi.; Isthm. ix.)

After the fall of Hiero's family, its chief adherents gathered anew to re-found the city of Camarina: and for one of these, Psaumis (about B.C. 452), Pindar wrote his two last Odes (Ol. iv. v.)

The other Sicilian or Italian Greeks commemorated by Pindaric Odes were Agesias, an honoured inhabitant of Syracuse in the reign of Hiero (Ol. vi.); Ergoteles of Himera, originally a refugee from Crete, who made Sicily his adopted country (Ol. xii.); Midas, the flute-player of Agrigentum (Pyth. xii.); and a boy named Agesidamus, of the tribe of the Italian or Western Locrians, to whom Pindar addressed two

* It is possible, however, that Xenocrates died before the fall of the dynasty.

Odes, the first being little more than a promise of the second, which followed at an interval of some years, and opens with an apology for the delay (Ol. x. xi.)

The circumstance that so many of Pindar's Odes were addressed to Sicilians certainly gives a great probability to the traditions of Pindar's sojourn at the court of Hiero. This probability is increased by certain expressions which the poet employs to describe his own relations, especially, with Hiero and Thrasybulus. Towards Xenocrates, again, he employs the language of one who had seen and admired his conduct as a host and as a citizen. His language to Hiero implies a very considerable degree of intimacy, and an acquaintance with his character and the surroundings of his court that could scarcely be derived from mere hearsay. An extremely sharp attack, also, which he makes on some "pair" of rivals (probably Simonides and Bacchylides), seems prompted by the recollection of some unpleasant scene in Thero's palace, —some combination of the "pair" to silence or otherwise put down the Theban poet.*

> "Vain their lore, base pair! that croak like crows
> Round the heavenly bird of Jove."

From another passage it appears that the same or similar influences were at work also against Pindar in Hiero's court, and that Pindar had friends at Syracuse who kept him informed on the subject. "The guile of slanderers," he cries, "is fatal alike to their dupe and their victim!"†

* Ol. ii. 87. † Pyth. ii. 76.

"Theirs is the crafty fox's mood;
Yet what, the while, such gainful cunning's gain?
Like loaded nets they drudge beneath the main—
I, the buoyant cork, that rides unscathed above the flood!"

And he adds that he knows his friends and his foes, and will love the one, and dart like a wolf upon the other.

The Third Pythian also expresses a wish to visit Hiero (about B.C. 474), and Boeckh thinks it probable that this wish was carried out next year, and that the First Nemean to Chromius (B.C. 473), the First Olympian to Hiero, and the Twelfth Olympian to Ergoteles (both probably B.C. 472), were composed by Pindar in Sicily.

Yet the external evidence for this visit is extremely slight. The sojourn of Simonides and Bacchylides at Hiero's court is attested on good authority: not so that of Pindar. And it is at least remarkable, though it seems to have escaped the notice of commentators, that Xenophon's imaginary dialogue "Hiero," composed certainly within a century of Pindar's death,* and exhibiting the most complete extant picture of the intercourse between Hiero and Simonides, says not a word of any visit to Hiero from Pindar.

The legends of Olympia, which Pindar has introduced into his Odes, comprise (1) the adventures of Pelops; (2) the institution of the contests by Heracles at the tomb of Pelops, the planting and naming of Mount Cronius, and the introduction of the olive-trees which supplied the crown; (3) the first celebra-

* Xenophon can hardly have been born later than B.C. 442, the supposed year of Pindar's death.

tion of the Olympic festival, and the winners of its earliest prizes; (4) the transference by Heracles to the Tyndarids, Castor and Polydeuces (or Pollux), of his self-chosen duty of superintending the games, when his own deification removed him to another sphere. These legends are embodied in the First, Third, and Eleventh Olympian Odes, which may now be considered briefly in succession.

The First Olympian Ode was written for Hiero, and commemorates his success in the horse-race with a horse bearing the appropriate name of Pherenicus, or "the victor." It opens with the oft-quoted maxim, "Best is water,"* and proceeds at once to the occasion of the Ode. Water is the first of boons, gold the first of treasures, and Olympia the first of festivals. Olympia it is that wakes our lays, as we approach the happy home of Hiero!

Then follows a picture of that home, its magnificence and culture, and an allusion (apparently) to the poet's personal knowledge of it.

> "With rod of righteousness the fields he sways
> Of pastoral Sicily, and culls the prime,
> Of virtue, while around him blaze
> The brightest flowers of rhyme,
> Such festal lays as oft we wake
> Around his board."

Then the victorious racer is set before us—

> "As by Alphëus' banks he sped.
> No need of spur—on, on he flies!
> And bears his master toward the prize."

* Repeated in Ol. iii. 44.

And then an allusion to the glory which this victory has given to Hiero in the Peloponnese, "the isle of Pelops," introduces us at once to the legendary history of that hero.

He was the son of Tantalus, and the favourite of Poseidon the Sea-god. Tantalus, the Lydian king, had enjoyed, but forfeited by some crime, the privilege of an extraordinary intimacy with the gods—he had shared their feasts, and entertained them at his table in return. Yet this favoured prince became at last a terrible monument of divine vengeance. He was sent to join Ixion and Sisyphus in Tartarus, tormented (according to some authors) by immersion in a pool of water, which receded whenever his lips approached it, while fruit just out of reach hung perpetually above his head.* Pindar follows a different legend, and imagines a huge stone, ever threatening to fall, poised magically above his head.

And why this change? Legends, or according to Pindar "some envious neighbour," told a hideous tale of a "caldron," in which Tantalus, preparing to feast the gods, had boiled the mangled body of his son. The frightful banquet had begun, when the crime was discovered, and Clotho, the goddess of Fate, drew from the caldron the revivified body of Pelops. One shoulder only was missing—Ceres had unfortunately swallowed it; but the place of the absent limb was ingeniously supplied by one of ivory! And so Tantalus was hurled to his well-merited doom in Tartarus. Pindar will have none of this revolting legend. The

* Hence our word "to tantalise."

crime of Tantalus is transmuted into an unpardonable yet amiable weakness. The food of the gods had given him immortality, and, Prometheus-like, he had bestowed on his fellow-men nectar and ambrosia stolen from the stores of heaven. Hence his punishment, and hence the cessation of the intercourse between his family and the gods. Pelops was sent back to join the fleeting race of men.

He grew up, and sought himself a bride—Hippodameia, daughter of Œnomaüs, king of Pisa. But the lady's hand could only be won by victory in a chariot-race, and the penalty of defeat was death. In his difficulty the lover appealed to Poseidon, and not in vain. At midnight, beside the lonely sea, he called and the god appeared. "Win me this bride, Poseidon! I implore thee by the memory of old affection. Thirteen suitors already hath Œnomaüs slain—it is a fearful peril"—

"Yet direst perils bravest hearts befit.
Die must we all—then why in darkness sit,
Chewing the cud of eld, unknown to fame,
Stranger to all that graces life? No! set am I to dare the strife;
Fulfil thou then my cherished aim!
He spake, nor vainly prayed: Poseidon gave
His golden car, and wingèd coursers brave."

So Œnomaüs and the maiden *fell** both at once, says Pindar (making one of those audacious puns that so often surprise us in serious Greek poetry)—Œnomaüs

* Literally, "he *took* (*i.e.*, slew) Œnomaüs, and (took) the maid to wife."

fell slain, his daughter fell to the conqueror. Six noble sons she bare him; and now he rests a deified hero, consecrating with his tomb the scene of his successful race. There to this day the noblest of Greece vie in friendly contests, and the victors enjoy for life all bliss that triumphs can bring.

And now a lay for Hiero! wisest and best of men that ever graced a poet's song. Long may he prosper, and earn yet loftier praises. The gifts of men differ—his is kingship, mine is poesy. I may not rival his bliss, but I am content with my own—to associate with victors, and excel all Greeks in song!

So the poem closes.

The Third Olympian Ode is addressed to Thero of Acragas, victor in the chariot-race. It was composed for performance at a feast in Acragas in honour of the great Twin-heroes to whom (as already mentioned) Heracles had bequeathed the superintendence of his games.

These accordingly, with their sister Helen, are invoked at starting, and then the poet passes to the occasion of his Ode—the recent victory at Olympia, which demands his choicest lay for the son of Ænesidamus. Well has Thero earned such praise; the fair award of the "Ætolian arbiter" (*i. e.*, the Eleian * judge) has crowned him with the olive that Heracles brought of old from the distant north, the marvellous land of the Hyperboreans, the shady fountains of Ister (the Danube).

* The Eleians, who in Pindar's day regulated the contests, were regarded as immigrants from Ætolia.

He had reared already the altar of his father Zeus, the centre of worship at Olympia; the full harvest moon shone upon the lists; but the "Altis," the sacred grove, was still to come,—the "Stadium," the race-course, still lacked the olives which were to furnish the victor's crown.

"Already, by rocky Alpheus' side, to glorious contests sanctified
Those quinquennial lists were set:—
And Cronian Pelops' dells were treeless yet!
All naked to the scorching sun they lay:
So to Ister's shores he took his way."

He had visited that land before, bearing to Diana the wondrous stag with horns of gold from the jagged Arcadian mountains, whose capture had been one of the Twelve Labours imposed upon him by his harsh kinsman Eurystheus, "a little more than kin and less than kind," and submitted to by the hero in expiation of an involuntary crime. Thither had he come, and gazed entranced on the wondrous trees of the Northern land:—

"And longing seized his soul to deck with these
His twelve-fold course."

With these, then, he returned to Pisa, and surely *now* too his presence is among us; surely with his successors the Tyndaridæ he comes to share the feast! Gloriously does Thero honour those Tyndaridæ, and gloriously have they rewarded him. What blisses may exist beyond a mortal's reach "I know not, nor I greatly care not"*—

* Shakespeare, Richard II.

"But sure as water knows no peer, and best
Is gold of riches, Thero's deeds have pressed
To fame's last cape! What further lies, is barred alike to
fools and wise:—
I will not venture there, else vain were I!"

Thus, having in fancy conducted his patron to the fabled Pillars of Heracles, the limits of the ancient world, which later authors identified with the Straits of Gibraltar, Pindar leaves him to "the contemplation of his own perfections"—not quite a god, but all that man may be.

The Eleventh Olympian Ode is addressed to the boy-wrestler Agesidamus of Western Locris. The poet had been an eyewitness of the victory * which it records, and had hastily composed a brief Ode for performance at a banquet immediately following upon the victory. This poem, which figures in our collection as the Tenth Olympian, after an allusion to the circumstances of its production—a timely service rendered at a moment's notice by the bard to his patron,—goes on to promise a future lay more worthy of its occasion, to be sung when Agesidamus reaches his Italian home:—

"If Heaven empower this mortal to unfold
Poesy's bright flowers: and so,
Agesidamus, for thy prowess know—
Son of Archestratus—my songs anew
Shall gild your golden bays,
And bring the clans of Western Locrians praise."

And the Ode closes with a tribute to the chivalry and culture of these Locrians, ingrained in them as cunning is in foxes, or courage in lions.

* Cf. line 100 of the Ode.

Of that promise the Eleventh Ode was the fulfilment, but it had been so long delayed as to suggest the need of an apology. "Forgive me! I had forgotten my debt, but now it shall be paid with usury."

Then the poet affects a hesitation. So many themes crowd in upon his fancy: which shall he choose? Shall he dwell on the culture and prowess of the Locrians? or on their national legends—the hero Cycnus who had dared to encounter Heracles? or on the merits of Agesidamus's trainer Ilas, the Achilles to this young Patroclus, whose instruction had developed natural gifts without which all teaching would have been vain? At last a theme is chosen, on which Pindar had doubtless resolved from the first, the legend of the first Olympian festival.

Rapidly the war of Heracles against the Epeian monarch Augeas is sketched. The king was slain; his city sacked; and from its spoils, collected in Pisa, the cost of the first "Olympia" was defrayed. Then it was that the "Hill of Cronus," a nameless snowy summit in the olden days of Œnomaüs and Pelops, received its well-known name. The lists were set, and the first Olympian victors received their prizes. And who were these? A catalogue is given, with all due detail:—

"In the stadium best, to the goal that pressed,
Thy son, Licymnius! showed his speed,
Œonus, leader of Midea's host: Tegea of Echemus made her boast
In wrestling famed: and the boxer's meed
To Tiryns town Doryclus bore:
Mantinean Samus with coursers four

In the chariots won—Halirothius' son:
And all unerring flew Phrastor's spear:
With strength unrivalled Eniceus flung the massy stone
in his grasp that swung,
And loud and long was his comrades' cheer!"

A tedious list to us, perhaps,—but who can tell what associations it suggested to Pindar's audience?

Then the fair moon rose on the scene, and revelry succeeded to the contests:—

"And straight around rang from each banquet sweet
Such songs as yet the victors greet."

"We too, in our later days, will raise that strain, and sing of Zeus and of victory. Long have we delayed, but our lay will be all the more welcome, when at last from its Theban fount it reaches the Locrian land. Hope deferred only heightens the joy of the aged father when at last the long-expected heir is born. So will it be with our song, long promised, long withheld."

"With eager joy the glorious house I greet!
Watering with dews of honey sweet
The Locrians' well-peopled state, thy noble son I
celebrate,
Archestratus,—as erst I saw him gain
Victory by Olympia's fane
On that auspicious day,
In form and feature fair,
Blent with such youthful bloom, as drove decay
Far from Ganymede, and brought him heavenly life with
Zeus to share."

No such thread of a common legend as we have traced in the above Odes unites the remaining poems

of the Olympian group. Thus the Eighth, addressed to an Æginetan, deals with legends which form the staple of the Nemean Odes. Four other important Olympian Odes respectively introduce us to the mythical annals of Arcadia, Rhodes, Corinth, and Northern Greece; but these must be reserved for future consideration, and the present chapter may close with a notice of four short Odes addressed to conquerors at Olympia,—mere trifles as compared with Pindar's greatest poems, yet trifles which, like the sketches of a Dürer or a Michelangelo, exhibit in their every line the hand of a master.

The Fourth and Fifth Olympian Odes were written to commemorate a single victory, that of Psaumis of Camarina in the race of mule-cars. The fourth appears to have been sung on the evening of the race by the band of revellers who escorted Psaumis to offer his thanks at the altar of Olympian Zeus. The fifth was performed after the conqueror's return home in solemn procession to the shrine of his city's local patroness, the Nymph Camarina, whom the poet invokes as a daughter of Ocean.

The first of these two little poems (Ol. iv.) contains one of Pindar's most audacious metaphors. He wishes to convey in a single word a picture of the doomed giant Typho writhing in unavailing struggles beneath the roots of Ætna, pinioned and crushed by the huge mass that soars above him. Now in the species of mouse-trap which Greek householders favoured, it was provided that a heavy piece of wood called the "ipos" or "press" should drop upon the rash intruder.

Wherefore Pindar, scorning to beat about the bush with explanation or apology for the phrase, calls Ætna outright—

"The wind-swept *press* of Typho."

Psaumis was an elderly man, and his appearance in the lists seems to have provoked irreverent jokes in some quarters. But Pindar soothes his patron, and shames the levity of the jesters, by recalling the myth of another grey-haired champion, the hero-son of Clymenus. He too had been scorned by his rivals; but he recked little for their scorn when he took his prize from the fair hands of Queen Hypsipylè, and read a lesson to his detractors:—

"Such is my speed! And know
My hands too, and heart are so!
On heads that have not passed their prime,
Locks of grey full often grow,
Ere the appointed time!"

Camarina, it will be remembered, had lately been repeopled by the expelled adherents of Hiero's dynasty at Syracuse (B.C. 461); thus, then, in the Fifth Ode, Pindar describes the new houses rising on the banks of the Hipparis, and constructed of logs brought downstream from the interior. The river-god, says the poet, builds and blesses the city—

"Hipparis, that waters all thy host with honoured urns,
Gathering a stately forest round his banks of storied homes,—
Guided of whose grace thy people fast from dearth to glory comes!"

Thus the alchemy of song transmutes the rough log-huts of the new settlement into a stately forest, with a god to plant it, to water it, and to give it increase.

The Ode for Ergoteles of Himera, victor in the long-race (Ol. xii.), stands in one respect alone among the compositions of Pindar. It is from first to last the expression of a single thought—"Inscrutable are the ways of Providence."

Civil strife had driven Ergoteles from his native Cretan city. But this seeming misfortune, says the poet, has proved a blessing in disguise. Had he remained at home in Crete—

"Cooped like a cock from foes beyond its pen"—

he would have frittered away in petty insular competitions the gift of speed which, under more favourable auspices, has ripened into victory at Olympia, Pytho, and the Isthmus. Yet who could have foreseen such a result of exile? How little men know of their real good! Verily, "a man cannot tell what shall be."

This one thought underlies the whole Ode. It opens with an invocation of Fortune, the saviour-goddess, piloting ships at sea, wars and councils by land. This leads to a fine description of the vanity of human expectations, and the fortunes of Ergoteles are used to point the moral of the poem.

Very graceful and pleasing is the little Ode (Ol. xiv.) in honour of the boy-racer Asopichus of Orchomenus, in Bœotia. Pindar, when it pleased him, could touch a theme as lightly and daintily as Horace himself. As the old Greek scholiast remarked, when he reached at

fast an easy passage in his Thucydides, "Here the lion smiled!" It is occupied chiefly with an invocation of the Graces—the three sister-deities, Joy, Brightness, and Song; and then at its close, with a charming touch of natural feeling, the orphan-boy is reminded of his lost father, and Echo or Rumour is summoned to bear to the dead Cleudamus the tidings of his son's success:—

> "How by the glens of glorious Pisa he
> Crowned his young locks with plumes of victory.'

Similarly in another Ode,* the victory of the Æginetan boy, Alcimedon, is described as the theme of mutual congratulations among deceased members of his house in Hades:—

> "Iphion (by Rumour, Hermes' daughter, taught)
> Shall to Callimachus repeat, what pride
> Zeus in Olympia to their house hath brought."

Thus, with a simple and cheerful faith, Pindar enforces that creed which Aristotle tells us it would be "too unkind" to reject, that "the good fortunes of kinsmen count for something to the dead."

* Ol. viii. 81.

CHAPTER VII.

SICILY.—THE SYRACUSAN AND AGRIGENTINE DYNASTIES.

We saw in the last chapter that all the Odes embodying local legends of Olympia were addressed to Sicilians, and that two out of the three were addressed to Sicilian kings—Hiero of Syracuse and Thero of Acragas. Four other Odes were written by the poet for these princes —three for Hiero * and one for Thero; † and though these Odes are not connected by a common mythological substratum, it may be convenient to consider them together. We shall thus have before us a group of Odes illustrating Pindar's relations with the dynasties of Syracuse and Acragas; and this group may be completed by the addition of four more Odes, two ‡ of which are addressed to Chromius, Hiero's viceroy in Ætna, and two § to kinsmen of Thero, Xenocrates and his son Thrasybulus. In this group, as in all the Odes addressed to Sicilians, we shall find the poet less careful than usual to select his mythical illustrations from the national and family legends of his patrons. The practice which he here adopts is rather to select

* Pyth. i. ii. iii. † Ol. ii.
‡ Nem. i. ix. § Pyth. vi.; Isthm. ii.

some topic of encomium or admonition suitable to the present circumstances of the person whom he is addressing, and then, irrespective of any further considerations, to choose from the rich stores of his mythological knowledge any legend which will serve to illustrate his point.

Thus in the Second Pythian, addressed to Hiero, the chief myth which the Ode contains is introduced solely with a didactic purpose. It is the tale of Ixion's twofold guilt, unnatural murder and unlawful love. The murder is briefly mentioned, but Pindar dwells at length on the criminal infatuation which induced Ixion to attempt an intrigue with the queen of the gods—Hera, the spouse of Zeus.

> "Justly he suffered for his sin
> A signal doom."

With bitter mockery of his presumptuous rival, Zeus caused a cloud to assume the shape of Hera; and then, in the moment of his fancied triumph, Ixion found himself hurled down to Tartarus, and suspended for ever in torment on a revolving wheel. The gods had admitted him to friendly intercourse with themselves, and he had abused their kindness. And now, says Pindar, his fate is a perpetual lesson to mankind

> "That still should gratitude good deeds repay."

To explain the introduction of this legend, we must refer to the general moral teaching of the Ode, and to the knowledge which we obtain from other authorities as to the events of Hiero's life. Now the Ode, though full of lofty compliments to Hiero's natural capacities

for virtue, abounds also in grave and pointed warnings against particular faults—jealousy, impatience, love of flattery, trust in evil counsellors, and the like. And it appears that the Ode was written at a time when Hiero's tendency to these defects seemed likely to lead him into serious guilt and disastrous folly. He had but just succeeded to his kingdom, and his brother Polyzelus held a position in it little, if at all, inferior in power to his own. Nay, by marrying the widow of the late king, Polyzelus had taken a step which, in the eyes of a jealous rival, might easily appear as a preliminary to the assertion of a claim to the throne. Yielding either to his own fears or to the suggestions of evil advisers, Hiero seems to have formed a scheme which recalls the Biblical narrative of David and Uriah. Polyzelus should be sent to perish in attacking a neighbouring city, and the queen should become the wife of Hiero. Polyzelus, however, was warned and fled. He appealed for protection to Thero of Acragas, the son and heir of his late brother's old comrade Ænesidamus, and his appeal was successful. A demand on Hiero's part for the extradition of Polyzelus was disregarded by Thero, and a war seemed imminent, but was somehow averted. We have already alluded to the story that the quarrel was appeased by the mediation of Pindar's rival, Simonides.

These events probably explain the mythical contents of the Second Pythian. Hiero's foolish and guilty designs on the wife of Polyzelus, the murderous scheme which his jealous fear of his brother suggested, the unseemliness of such a quarrel as seemed impend-

ing between the once friendly houses of Deinomenes and Ænesidamus—the rashness, the violence, and the disregard of natural ties and obligations involved in the whole transaction—are rebuked by implication in the poet's strictures on Ixion. Yet Pindar's warnings are conveyed with such tact that the Ode never ceases to seem an encomium. He dwells on the innate nobility of Hiero's character, and he urges the king to escape his temptations, not by becoming better, but by being what he is :—

"Learn thy true self, and live it!"

Flattery and evil counsels, he hints, are putting Hiero into a false position. Let him be himself, and no further reformation will be needed. Was ever an unpalatable warning conveyed with more consummate tact? The very reproach assumes the guise of a compliment. The censor is at the same time a panegyrist.

No less delicately does Pindar hint his disapproval of another defect in Hiero's character, a tendency to avarice. He enlarges, not on the evil effects of the vice, but on the advantages of the virtue which is its opposite, and contrives simultaneously to pay tribute to the magnificence of Hiero's position :—

"Wealth is thine, and bounty more may its powers unfold :
Sovereign thou of mighty nation, and tower-crowned town!
Boasteth any, that ever Hellas in days of old
Bare a son as peerless in wealth, or in high renown?
—Empty his vaunt, his labour lost!

I'll climb Song's flowery prow, and there recite
Thy valour's praise. Ever doth martial might
Youthful vigour glorify. The prouder, then, thy boast :
For not thy worth in wars alone, afoot or mounted, thou hast shown !
But riper Wisdom's renown is thine,
Then fearless flows my praise and free. Farewell ! these songs I send to thee,
Like Tyrian wares o'er the foaming brine."

So also Hiero is not directly warned to abandon his schemes of aggression against Thero, but he is gently reminded that thus far his reign has brought to his people the blessings of peace—blessings which extend also to his neighbours the Italian Locrians :—

"Deinomenes' son, of thee
Sings at her door each Locrian maid, and looks abroad no more afraid,
From horrors of war by thy power set free !"

Pindar does not expressly urge Hiero to contrast the blessings of this peaceful present with the gloomy future which he is preparing for himself by war with Thero. He does not say in so many words, "Look on this picture and on that." But his moral is perfectly clear, and Hiero could hardly fail to draw it for himself.

With all his tact Pindar is no mere courtier, prepared to ignore his patron's faults. He might easily have avoided the dangerous topic altogether. That he did not do so, proves both that he really cared for Hiero —or why should he have sought to reform him ?—and

that he honestly believed in the intrinsic goodness of his patron—or how could he hope that his admonitions would take effect? But it is not surprising that the poet's caution should have exposed him in some quarters to the charge of servility; or that his mingling of open praise and covert censure should have puzzled later readers, and led them to form strangely different estimates of Hiero's character: some describing him as the ideal king—brave, generous, trustful, and affectionate; while to others he appears as a vulgar tyrant—mean, grasping, and treacherous. A right understanding of Pindar's language presents us with another and probably a truer view. Hiero had great qualities and great faults; his position was one of great advantages, but also of great temptations: he was necessarily exposed to the machinations of evil counsellors, but his ears were not closed to the admonitions of honest friends. He was not an Alfred, but neither was he a Tiberius or a Caligula.

The moral lessons of the Second Pythian reappear to some extent in the Third and First Odes of the same group, also addressed to Hiero. In each we find the same mingling of praises and warnings,—warnings against ambition, avarice, rashness, seductions of evil counsellors, and the like. But, unlike the Second Pythian, neither the first nor the third is mainly occupied with these topics. In the third we find a prominent place assigned to the myth of Asclepius (Æsculapius), the legendary inventor of medicine. And, though certain points in the narrative seem introduced with a didactic purpose—hinting at the evil

consequences of presumption, avarice, and trust in seductive advisers—this is not the immediate and obvious occasion of the story. Hiero was suffering from a painful and dangerous illness, and apparently had invited the poet to visit him. This leads Pindar to express a wish that he could call back from their graves the old masters of Greek leechcraft, to furnish his friend with the relief which he seeks in vain from the degenerate practitioners of his own day. "Could I but reawaken Asclepius, or his teacher Chiron," says the poet, "how gladly would I cross the seas to Hiero, and bring him Health as well as Songs!"

"Oh, if still within his grot
Dwelt Chiron sage, and this my lay
Had spells to bind his soul, him had I won
E'en now to send such healer to the good,
(Of Phœbus or his sire,* some true-born son!)
My bark should cleave the Ionian foam, and seek the hospitable home
Of Ætna's chief, by Arethusa's flood."

And in this connection Pindar relates the whole story of Asclepius, the son of Phœbus, miraculously rescued from the flames of his mother's funeral pyre, trained—like Jason and Achilles and many another youthful hero — in the hospitable cave of Chiron, appearing afterwards as the most skilled physician of his day, healing the sick, and even at last raising the dead,—an interference with the prerogative of Zeus which was punished by the instant destruction of both the Healer and his patient.

* *i.e.*, of Zeus.

From this story Pindar passes to moral and philosophical reflections, adapted to the circumstances of his patron, and illustrated by appropriate myths. He consoles Hiero for his sufferings by reminding him that not even the old heroic kings, Peleus and Cadmus, "happiest of mortals," were wholly blest. He recalls the misfortunes of Cadmus's daughters, and the early death of Peleus's only son, Achilles. And the Ode closes with another reference to mythology, the immortal fame of Nestor and Sarpedon, which Hiero may rival if he imitates their virtues:—

"But few there are such bliss may lightly gain."

The opening verses of the First Pythian have already been quoted at the end of the first chapter. They contain that "Invocation of the Lyre" which is imitated by our own poet Gray, in his well-known "Ode on the Progress of Poesy." The mythological element in this Ode is slight. There is a brief allusion to the lame hero Philoctetes, whose assistance was needed to enable the Greeks of old to capture Troy. Hiero, physically infirm, yet a valiant and successful general, is compared to this fabled champion. And, complimenting Hiero on the constitution which he has established in his new city Ætna, "true to the good old Dorian type," Pindar pauses for a moment to dwell on the legendary migration of the Dorians from Northern Greece to Amyclæ in Laconia.

But the chief purpose of the Ode is to celebrate the military exploits of Hiero and his family, and especially their victories at Himera and Cumæ, which had

crushed for the time the two most powerful foes of the Greeks in Sicily, the Phœnicians of Carthage and the Tyrrhenians of Etruria. Thus Pindar describes the battle, and prays that its effects may be lasting:—

"Oh, grant that in peace the mingled host,
Phœnician and Tuscan, henceforth may dwell, late vanquished on Cumæ's coast!
Mourn they at home their navies brought by Syracusa's king to nought,
Who, headlong from the swift ship's side, their warriors hurled beneath the tide,
And rescued Hellas from serfdom sore.
For Salamis be Athens famed;
Nor less brave Sparta's feats proclaimed,
That laid beneath Cithæron low
The archer-Medians! But, by Himera's shore,
Guerdon we with praise the might of Hiero's house, that crushed the foe!"

The First Nemean is divided pretty equally between two themes, the virtues of Chromius (viceroy, as has been said, of Hiero in Ætna) and the myth of the infant Heracles. Allusion has been made in a previous chapter to the apparently gratuitous introduction of this legend; but a Nemean victory would naturally remind the poet of Heracles the slayer of the Nemean lion, and possibly the two snakes strangled by the infant hero may have been intended by Pindar to typify the combination of fierce barbarian foes over which the nascent Syracusan dynasty had triumphed so magnificently at Himera. Or he may have intended a compliment to the new civilisation which Chromius had established at Ætna, victorious over the deadly an

tagonisms of foreign war and internal disorder. The myth is told with admirable force and vividness, but is too long to quote entire. The following passage from it must suffice. The snakes have just entered the chamber—

"But as they came, the babe unterrified
Lifted his little head, and his first battle tried.
With either hand one horrid throat he grasped
Beneath those jaws of terror gaping wide.
Fast in that knot the monsters gasped,
Loosed their long spires, and drooped their head, and died.
Pierced by a pang of sudden fear,
Hurried the matrons near,
Who their kind vigil kept
Attentive where the mother slept.
And forth the mother rushed, *her feet all bare,*
E'en as she lay, in hope those monstrous beasts to scare.
At the wild cry the Thebans thronged amain
In brazen armour fain:
Amphitryon came in speed
Brandishing high his naked blade."—(S.)

Could anything be more graphic, or more true, than that picture of the mother rushing in "with feet all bare"? The trusty retainers stay to arm themselves; even Amphitryon—the putative father of the babe—lingers at least to seize a sword. But the mother can wait for nothing. "E'en as she lay," she rushes in, and outstrips all other succour.

The so-called Ninth Nemean really commemorates a victory won at Sicyon, and its mythical contents are drawn from the ancient local legends of that city, and of the Argive leader Adrastus, who had married a

Sicyonian princess. For the rest, the Ode contains a passing allusion to new troubles brewing against Sicily from its dangerous neighbour Carthage, and a magnificent panegyric on the military exploits of Chromius, whose valiant youth, says the poet, has surely entitled him to hope for a peaceful and honoured old age. The close of the poem presents us with one of Pindar's ingenious and striking combinations of fact and fancy. The wine of song must flow for Chromius. And what bowl so fit to hold it as the silver goblets which Chromius has brought from Sicyon—the prize of his recent victory? Thus boldly and dexterously does Pindar's fancy glide from the concrete to the ideal world—from objects of sense like the visible and tangible race-cups, to objects of imagination like the immaterial wine of song.

We come now to the three Odes addressed to members of the royal house of Agrigentum. Thero, to whom the Second Olympian is addressed, was evidently a loved and honoured patron of the poet. But in Pindar's portraiture of him we miss those graphic touches which make the personality of Hiero stand out so clearly in the imagination of Pindar's readers. The unmixed encomium which Pindar lavishes on the king of Acragas leaves us with but a vague idea of his real character, or of the poet's conception of it. Yet this encomium is very fine of its kind. The valour, the wisdom, and the kindness of Thero are portrayed in brilliant colours, though the outline be somewhat vague and sketchy. The gem of the whole poem,

however, is undoubtedly its description of the life after death—

"How swiftest vengeance waits the guilty dead;
And for the sins men sin in realms of day,
'Neath earth a stern judge speaks the sentence dread
Of fate's resistless sway.
But, by day alike and night,
Upon the righteous rises ever light;
They dwell in a life unvexed of toil, nor need to task the weary soil,
Nor waters of the main,
For scant subsistence. Tearless days they gain,
With those Heaven-honoured ones in Truth that joy;
While sinners cower 'neath weight of dire annoy.

Happiest they that thrice endure
Through life and death, and still from sin are pure.
For such Zeus leads to Cronus' tower, where round about the island bower
Of blessed spirits strays
Breath of sea airs, and golden flow'rets blaze,
Some on fair trees, some of the waters bred:
Wherewith themselves they garland hands and head."

The Ode ends with a fine outburst of admiration and gratitude:—

"Than Thero's, in a hundred years, no land
Shall rear you kinder heart nor freer hand!
Though envy strive his glories to deface
(No generous foe, but nursed in natures base,
That loves to talk the good man's praise away):
Yet, as the sand still foils the reckoner's count,
Such are the joys we owe him. Who shall say
How boundless their amount?"

The Sixth Pythian and the Second Isthmian both commemorate victories of Thero's brother Xenocrates. They are addressed, however, not to the victor himself, but to his son Thrasybulus. Pindar dwells warmly on the generous hospitality and kindliness of both father and son, and on the strong affection—honourable to both—which existed between them. In the race which forms the theme of the Sixth Pythian, Thrasybulus seems to have acted as charioteer to his father—and this incident suggests to Pindar the legend of another son who had rendered good service to his father Antilochus, son of the aged Nestor. In a skirmish under the walls of Troy, Nestor found himself in imminent danger: the terrible Memnon's spear was already uplifted to slay him, and in dismay he called to his son for aid—

> "Nor wasted on the earth his words he flung:
> Firm the hero stood,
> And for his father gave his blood.
> Thus in his day to all the young
> Seemed that achiever of a deed of might
> Pattern most fair of filial bravery."

"All of this is now gone by," adds the poet; but of the men of our own time Thrasybulus comes nearest to the old type of loyal sonship. And in other things, too, he is a worthy nephew of Thero—generous, pure, modest, cultured, and valiant—

> "Kind of heart, and such a friend
> To all that share in his feasts, as ne'er
> So sweet was fretwork of the bee!"

The Second Isthmian was written seemingly after the death of Xenocrates. The dynasty of Thero had fallen, but Thrasybulus still lived in Acragas. His personal virtues, or the favour of Hiero, sufficed to maintain him unmolested amid the citizens who had overthrown his kinsman's sovereignty, but not, apparently, to silence the resentful murmurs of some against the memory of the fallen house. Pindar hints that to some of these the praise of Xenocrates's exploits may prove unwelcome. Yet he urges Thrasybulus not to shrink from praising them. And, if we may trust the poet's description, Xenocrates was a father of whom a son might well be proud. He is depicted as the very mirror of Grecian chivalry, a genial gracious prince, his innate goodness expressing itself in his very aspect, keeping up the racing traditions of his family on principle, as a duty demanded of him by his position.

And as for his hospitality, it passed all bounds,—ranged (says Pindar) "from Phasis to Nile," or, as we might say, "from China to Peru:"—

> "Courteous his eye and bland. He loved to feed,
> As Grecians use, the gallant steed;
> Each holy sacrifice and feast
> He fed, a liberal guest:
> And oh! his hospitable mind
> Spread its full canvas to the wind,
> Wide as to Phasis' distant shore the while,
> Or furthest Nile."—(S.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IAMIDS.—DIAGORAS OF RHODES.

Among the many religious antiquities of Olympia in Pindar's time was an oracle, far less celebrated indeed than that of Apollo at Delphi, yet greatly venerated, and frequently consulted by such competitors in the games as desired to anticipate the verdict of the judges. Its answers were given, not as at Delphi by an inspired priestess, but by a sacerdotal caste or family who watched the sacrifices burning on the great altar of Olympian Zeus, and interpreted the phenomena which these presented according to certain traditional rules handed down as a family secret from father to son.

The family tie in Greece was exceedingly strong, and it was much cemented by the practice which prevailed of keeping certain sciences and religious rites confined as a sort of heirloom to particular families. Thus the medical art of Greece remained for a long time chiefly in the hands of the Asclepiads, who claimed descent from the hero Asclepius, the mythical inventor of medicine. Again, at Athens, the state religion was administered chiefly by a family known as

the Eumolpids, who professed to have inherited their functions from Eumolpus, founder of the Eleusinian mysteries, and first priest at Athens of Demeter (Ceres) and Dionysus (Bacchus). Every Greek house of any distinction had its own particular religious rites, and these, it was believed, could only be performed by members of the family. Accordingly, if such a set of rites was for any reason incorporated in a state religion, the members of the house to which it was attached became, as it were, a sacerdotal caste in the state, enjoying certain privileges and immunities, and reverenced as the channels through which the favour of particular deities passed to the community. Still it was not necessary that they should make their priesthood their main profession, or be excluded by reason of it from the ordinary occupations and functions of a citizen. With some few exceptions, the members of a priestly family might marry, might engage in any pursuits that they thought fit, and might even serve in the army. No such duties of instructing the laity, and the like, as have been associated in modern times with the clerical profession, were assigned to the Greek priesthoods. Nor were they in any way specially called upon, either by example or by precept, to influence or direct their neighbours in matters of morality. Beyond the maintenance of their peculiar religious rites, and the care of the temples and altars with which these were associated, a sacerdotal family had no distinctive duties to the state; and a few of its members, specially appointed to discharge such functions, would in practice suffice to fulfil all that was required of them in

this respect. The priesthood of the others was probably a mere honourable sinecure, a sort of honorary canonry in the temple-chapter, procuring for them a certain consideration in the eyes of their fellow-citizens, but no more necessarily connected with the performance of religious duties than a "courtesy title" in England with the functions of the legislature.

Again, the different sacerdotal families in the various states of Greece at no time constituted a collective national priesthood. Greek religion was, in fact, not so much an organised system as an aggregate of separate systems in a loose permissive communion. Between tribes of the same stock there was, however, more approach to uniformity of religious belief and ritual; and in these, accordingly, the several priesthoods were drawn into some sort of informal intercourse and connection. And when, as often happened, a state desired to incorporate into its own religion some part of a neighbour's ritual, some members of the priesthood attached to this were usually invited over to introduce and maintain it in its new home. Such persons and their descendants thenceforward enjoyed a distinguished and often lucrative position in their adopted state. And thus in Grecian history we meet with frequent instances of a sacerdotal family widely dispersed among the different nations of a common stock, retaining wherever they went their original family name, meeting from time to time at the altar of their original "cultus," and cherishing by mutual intercourse the memory of their common descent.

Such a family were the Iamids, hereditary priests

of Olympian Zeus, and custodians and interpreters of his oracle at Olympia. We find various members of this race engaged, from time to time, during the course of Greek history, as soothsayers in the many scattered communities of Dorian Greeks, not only in Sparta or Messenia or Mantinea in the Peloponnese, but in the distant colonies of the west, at Sybaris and Croton in South Italy. When Archias the Corinthian sailed for Sicily and founded the important town of Syracuse, one or more representatives of the Iamid stock accompanied the expedition, assisted in the religious ceremonies with which the new settlement was inaugurated, and obtained a share in the heroic honours assigned, according to universal Greek custom, to the founder.

Iamus, the legendary ancestor of this priestly house, was a son of Apollo, the god of divination, and inspirer of the great oracle at Delphi. The Olympian oracle was connected, as we have seen, with the worship of Zeus; but inasmuch as for some reason the old idea of Zeus as an inspirer of prophecy* had to some extent been obscured, and Apollo, the god of Delphi, had gradually occupied the place which Zeus in this aspect had formerly filled in the imagination of the Greeks, it was to Apollo, and not to Zeus, that the Iamids saw fit to trace their origin. Their priesthood at Olympia they described as an office to which the Delphian god had specially appointed their ancestor,

* His oracle at Dodona, reputed the most ancient in Greece, was extremely famous in early times; but its fame was afterwards completely eclipsed by that of Apollo's oracle at Delphi.

and their family traditions represented him as designated for it even before the institution of the Olympic festival. Among the rituals which members of their family had inaugurated in other states of Greece, was a peculiar cultus of Hermes (Mercury) at Stymphalus in Arcadia. And it was the special branch of Iamids settled at Stymphalus to maintain this worship which supplied to Archias the priests or soothsayers who assisted him in inaugurating with due rites the foundation of his colony at Syracuse.

The Sixth Olympian Ode commemorates a victory of one of these Syracusan Iamids—Agesias, the son of Archestratus, winner in the race of mule-cars. Probably Agesias occupied an important religious position at Syracuse, and his visit to Olympia would naturally bring him into connection with the original branch of his family established there to maintain the original oracle and altar. He had also, it appears, taken occasion on his visit to Greece to renew acquaintance with his kinsmen the priests of Stymphalus, and had received from the inhabitants of that town welcome and recognition as a fellow-citizen. With a mind full of all the associations which could be suggested by such a resumption of old family ties, he had now returned to Syracuse. And in the Ode which Pindar sent to him from Thebes for performance by a chorus in Syracuse, these associations are again recalled to him; the poet recognising in the family traditions of the Iamids a theme at once adapted to gratify his patron, and to furnish himself with an admirable opportunity for displaying the choicest treasures of his genius. It is

plain, from the mere opening of this Ode, that Pindar designed it for a masterpiece: and it exhibits in a remarkable degree all the most characteristic features of his poetry—as well those which the severest criticism must admit to be beauties, as those which to a modern, though not to an ancient reader, must seem defects. The passage describing the infancy of Iamus is probably the most touching and beautiful in the whole range of Pindaric poetry. The profusion and originality of the poet's fancy are exhibited through the Ode to an extent which, even in Pindar, is truly amazing. But the rapidity of its transitions from theme to theme; the abundance of unexplained allusions; the mixture of myth, fact, and allegory throughout the poem; and the amazing audacity of expression—verging more than once on the grotesque, or even the ludicrous,—will excite in a modern reader sensations of astonishment rather than of pleasure.

Several of Pindar's longer Odes open with an elaborate metaphorical description of his poetry. He compares it to wine in a golden goblet presented by some rich lord to his daughter's spouse;* to a bath prepared by a skilful physician to refresh the weary athlete;† to a stingless arrow launched in love and not in hate.‡ Elsewhere he contrasts his own art favourably with that of the sculptor, whose images remain motionless on the pedestal, while *his* fly far and wide through Greece.§ On this occasion it is architecture that supplies his metaphor:—

* Ol. vii.; cf. Isthm. v.
† Nem. iv.
‡ Ol. ix.; cf. Ol. ii. 89.
§ Nem. v.

"As who would frame some gorgeous hall, uprears its
porch with shapely wall
On golden pillars hung:
Our song's proud front must glitter from afar."

And then an allusion to the victor's success, and the sacerdotal honours of his family at Syracuse and Olympia, suggests a comparison of him to the hero-prophet Amphiaraus, "warrior both and seer," whose death, foreseen of himself, had deprived the famous Seven against Thebes of the very "eye" of their expedition.

But the poet will not linger on this theme. With an apostrophe of amazing vigour and originality he calls on Phintias, the victor's charioteer, to yoke his mules for a new course. But it is not the mere material car, with which they had triumphed at Olympia, that they are now to draw. They are to be attached to a nobler chariot—the ideal car of the Muses. Their victory has, as it were, "sublimated their essence," and raised them into ideal beings, suitable for the ideal task demanded of them. So then through the gates of Song, whose bars fly back to admit them, the spiritualised mules and the spiritual chariot must pass, and bear the poet far away to Pitanè.

Pitanè was in sober fact a suburb or parish of Sparta; but Pindar's present purpose was not a visit to the city beside the Eurotas. In ancient Greece, as in modern Cornwall, nine-tenths of the names of places were believed to be derived from legendary saints, or, as the Greeks called them, heroes, whose shrines or tombs were still exhibited to believers as evidence for

the truth of their legends. So it was at Pitanè; the name of the place was given also to a local nymph, bride of Poseidon and mother of Evadne. It was in this latter sense of the name, as referring to a *person* and not to a *place*, that Pindar wishes to "come to Pitanè." Availing himself of the ambiguity of the name, Pindar sustains as long as possible the illusion of a journey to the place Pitanè, and then all at once the veil is withdrawn, and the object of the allegorical journey is explained. For Pitanè was the mother of Evadne, and Evadne was the mother of IAMUS! that Iamus whose story Pindar had all along designed as the centre of his poem—the prophet-hero from whom Agesias claimed descent.

For reasons of her own, Pitanè had intrusted Æpytus, an Arcadian prince, with the charge of the maiden Evadne. In his care she grew up, fair and gentle, with tresses dark as the iris. Apollo saw, and loved her; but her secret was hid from Æpytus till she became a mother. In vain did the guardian inquire her lover's name. But the strange irony of fate sent him at last to ask counsel in this matter from the lover himself!

"Forth with rage and grief at heart, to Pytho speeding fast,
Counsel he sought of the god that might such woes remove."

Ere long he returned delighted and amazed. "The god had owned his child. The child was to be a prophet, unrivalled among men, and the parent of an imperishable race. But where was the child?"

Where was he?

Specially protected by Hithyia, the kind goddess of Birth, who stays the mother's pains, and by the Moiræ or Fates, who take charge of the new-born child and ordain his future lot, Evadne had borne a child inspired of heaven, deep in the "azure" thicket. But in her utter despair the poor mother laid her child upon the ground, and turned weeping away. Like Hagar, she could not see the child die.

And now the king was asking for the child. But four days had passed since that miserable parting of child and mother, and none had seen him since. Where was he now?

Apollo had not forgotten the son, whom his very mother had forsaken. She had

"Left him laid on earth.
But thither, lo! with honey's harmless bane
To feed him, came two heaven-sent bright-eyed snakes."

And so, when the seekers came upon him,—

"There he lay
Safe couched in reeds amid the trackless wild,
His soft limbs bathed in gold and purple ray
Of violets. So the mother bade him bear
Ever the violets' name:"

—*i.e.*, she named him Iamus: IA being the Greek name for some sort of flowers, which, if not identical with our violets, sufficiently correspond to them for the purposes of readers who are not professed botanists.

The promises of the god were fulfilled. The child became a man, and Apollo granted him a double por-

tion of prophetic gifts. His predictions were at first to be guided by direct intimations vouchsafed to him by the god; afterwards he was to read the future in the sacrifices which Heracles should ordain at Olympia.

Then come allusions to the after-glory of the Iamids, and especially to their pious observance of the rites of Hermes at Stymphalus, which had won Agesias the special favour of Hermes and his father Zeus. But the thought of Stymphalus reminds Pindar of a legendary connection between his own city and Stymphalus; for was not Thebè, whose pleasant waters he is drinking even now, a daughter of the Stymphalian nymph Metopa? Here is a theme on which he cannot be silent—

> "Meseemeth a whetstone shrills at my tongue!"

And, full of this patriotic fervour, he bursts into an ardent protest against the scornful nickname which their livelier neighbours had fixed on the proverbially slow-witted Bœotians.* "Surely, Æneas," he cries, apostrophising the chorus-master who superintends the performance of the Ode—"surely we shall now escape that ancient jeer—*Bœotian swine!*" Then, in two far-fetched but ingenious metaphors, he describes the functions of Æneas, who is charged with the commis-

* Themistius says: "Men called Bœotia 'a sow,' mocking the people, I suppose, for their want of culture. However, Pindar and Corinna and Hesiod were not defiled by contact with the sow."—(Orat. xxvii.) Dionysius of Halicarnassus thus enumerates the characteristics of various tribes: "An Athenian—sharp, talkative, clever; an Ionian—luxurious; a Bœotian—stupid."

sion of carrying his Ode to Syracuse and training the chorus there. First, he calls his chorus-master "a Muses' mission-staff," alluding to a Greek practice of rolling paper spirally along a stick, and then writing a despatch upon it. When the paper was unrolled, the letters on it appeared, of course, scattered in confusion over it. The receiver rolled the paper once more round a similar stick, and was thus able to read it. It formed, in fact, a rude anticipation of our "cipher-despatches." Æneas, as interpreting Pindar's inspirations to the chorus, is compared to the stick by whose help the despatch was read. For a similar reason Pindar further addresses Æneas as the "mixing-bowl," from which the wine of song is ladled out into those smaller vessels, the members of the chorus, through which at last it reaches Agesias and his friends.

Last follow praises of Syracuse and Hiero, whom he pictures as welcoming Agesias, newly returned in triumph from Stymphalus — returned "home from a home." Agesias, with his double citizenship, Syracusan and Stymphalian, recalls to Pindar the image of a vessel doubly moored at stern and prow, defying the utmost fury of the elements. And still maintaining this little allegory, he prays the deities of the ocean to bring that vessel home with joy :—

> "Grant, god of the seas, fair journey to these ;—
> And bid my songs new blooms of grace unfold!"

Diagoras of Rhodes, for whom the Seventh Olympian Ode was written, belonged to a noble, and, in older days, even a royal family in that island. Two curious

stories attest the athletic renown of his house. His son Dorieus, a famous athlete, was captured by the Athenians in a sea-fight. Greek morality did not forbid the massacring of prisoners of war, and fortunate was the captive who could escape by payment of a ransom. But the Athenians, though embittered by a long series of disasters, instantly, and without exacting a ransom, set the distinguished captive at liberty.*

We are informed also, by numerous ancient authors, that a female member of this family, a daughter apparently of Diagoras himself, named Pherenicè, ventured to transgress a law which forbade the presence of women at Olympia, through anxiety to witness the performance of her son in the lists. The boy was successful, but his mother was detected. Such an offence, according to law, should have been punished with death—the offender to be hurled headlong from a neighbouring height. But the culprit pleaded the exceptional athletic position of her family, and the plea was allowed to prevail. Permission was even added—a permission granted to no woman before or since—that Pherenicè should be admitted to witness any future Olympic festival.

Allusion has already been made to the exordium of this Ode :—

" As some wealthy lord in greeting of his daughter's spouse should lift
In his hand a brimming beaker, where the grape's bright juices foam,

* Grote, Hist. of Greece, Part II., chap. lxiv.

Passing to the youth a gift,
Erst the crown of all his riches, destined now to other home,
For the honour of his banquet, pleased his new-made son to make
Envied of each friendly feaster for his happy wedlock's sake:
So to champions crowned at Pytho and Olympia I send
Draughts of Nectar sweet, the Muses' boon, the soul's delicious fruit,
Gladdening each victor-friend!"

Pindar had now (B.C. 464) reached the climax of his fame. Even to such a hero as Diagoras he could adopt the tone of an equal, almost of a superior. Nor did the haughty Rhodians resent the poet's boasts. They engraved this Ode in golden letters on their temple of the Lindian Athenè.

Three legends follow, all connected with the mythical history of Rhodes. First we hear how Tlepolemus, fleeing from his native Tiryns in expiation of a hasty homicide, was directed by the Delphian oracle to the beautiful isle of Rhodes, the birthplace of the goddess Athenè. Next follows the tale of the settlement founded by Tlepolemus. The oracle had enjoined the perpetual offering of burnt-sacrifices to the goddess who had been born there, and to her father Zeus. But "blind oblivion" obscured the memory of this ordinance, and the altars remained unkindled. Yet the neglected deities were not alienated. Zeus rained riches on the land, and Athenè made its inhabitants matchless in the arts. A curious description follows of "figures like to things that live and move" which

filled their streets. Pindar seems to imply that these figures were actually locomotive automata. But he is careful to defend the artificers from the imputation of magical practices. Theirs was legitimate skill, marvellous indeed, yet no encroachment upon the prerogative of Deity—the right of granting life to such things only as seems good to it. Lastly, Pindar tells of a day, ere yet the gods had portioned among themselves the new-created earth,—a day when not as yet

"Towered the Rhodian isle conspicuous over Ocean's waves, but still
Deep it lay beneath the whelming brine."

One deity alone was accidentally absent from the allotment. It was the Sun-god Helios:—

"None was there to claim a portion for the absent God of Light.
Him, the pure and holy one, they left disfranchised of his lot."

The oversight was unintended, and Zeus would have cast the lots again. But the Sun-god declined the offer. He saw, he said, a land rising from the depths of ocean—

"Rich in sustenance for man and plenteous pasturage for sheep."

And then, addressing the Goddess of Fate who presided over the allotment, he invoked her to lift her hands and swear that, when such country appeared, it should be assigned to him. The promise was given,

and Rhodes appeared from the waters—the portion of Helios.

With the island appeared also its tutelary nymph, Rhodos (*i.e.*, the Rose). Readers may remember some years ago in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy a beautiful picture * in illustration of the tale—the emerging island, the nymph surrounded with the flowers from which her name was taken, the Sun-god descending to claim his bride.

From the union of Helios and Rhodos sprang, says Pindar, seven noble sons. And to three of these sons he traces the three independent communities which in his own day occupied the island, the cities of Lindus, Ialysus, and Camirus.

A dazzling enumeration of Diagoras's victories closes the Ode. Olympia and Pytho had been already mentioned as scenes of his triumph; now we hear of prizes brought by him from the Isthmus, Nemea, Argos, Athens, Arcadia, Thebes, Pellene, Ægina, Megara—a marvellous list indeed. Yet the poet adds a word of caution; he dares not finish with a boast. Let Diagoras remain true to his inherited principles, a loyal, law-abiding citizen. Thus he may hope to avoid the special dangers of success, the fatal pride which too often intoxicates the victor, and alienates his countrymen. All is well with him now. May it but remain so!—

"For now the state holds festival,
With the Eratids rejoicing: yet full oft in shortest space
Veers with sudden sweep the fickle gale!"

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* Helios and Rhodos, by Sir F. Leighton, *P.* R.A.

It is to be hoped that Diagoras was wise enough to profit by the poet's warning. We find in the history of Greece enough gloomy records of aristocratic lawlessness, and fierce reprisals on the part of the oppressed classes when at last the crash came, to assure us that such warnings were often needed.

CHAPTER IX.

CYRENE.

One of the most famous and flourishing of Greek settlements in distant lands was Cyrenè, on the northern coast of Africa. It occupied a site of rare beauty and fertility, a succession of natural terraces, culminating in a high and spacious table-land, and projecting with a bold curve northwards into the Mediterranean. Thus its position at once gave it the full benefit of the cool sea-breezes, and screened it effectually from the hot and unwholesome winds of the deserts in the interior. The region abounded in streams running down through deep and sheltered gorges to the sea. Both slopes and gorges were clothed in the richest vegetation, and the various elevations of the different ridges produced such differences of climate, that the successive harvests in different parts of the region lasted no less than eight months of the year. Among the many rare and valuable products of Cyrenè, the most important was a plant called Silphium, indigenous to the country, and apparently peculiar to it, whose stalk, root, and

juices were highly esteemed all over Greece, and employed largely both as food and as medicine. The monopoly of this valuable plant, coupled with the other choice products of the place, made Cyrenè one of the wealthiest cities in the Grecian world. Splendid buildings, whose ruins may yet be traced, rose around the "fountain of Apollo." The beautiful parks of the Cyrenaic merchant-princes gained for the place the title of "the garden of Aphroditè." * Horse-breeding, the invariable accompaniment (as we have seen) of prosperity in a Greek state, was carried on largely by the great families; and in spite of the cost and difficulty of conveying racers and chariots from Africa to Greece, the Greeks of Libya were not unfrequently represented in the great equestrian competitions of the mother country, and especially in those at Delphi, whose oracle was believed to have originally enjoined the foundation of the Cyrenaic colony. Other forms of athleticism also flourished at Cyrenè, and boxers and racers from that city won many prizes in the great Greek games. Ælian has an amusing anecdote of a Cyrenaic boxer, whose teeth were loosened by an unlucky blow of his antagonist. But the champion was not discouraged by this misadventure; he swallowed his teeth, continued the contest, and was victorious! †

Three of Pindar's Pythian Odes—the fourth, the fifth, and the ninth—commemorate victories of Cyrenaic competitors at Delphi, and embody ancient legends of Cyrenè, and of its ruling family, the "Bat-

* Pyth. v. 24. † Æl. Var. Hist. x. 19.

tiadæ." The town was believed to derive its name from Cyrenè, a Thessalian nymph beloved of Apollo, who had been conveyed by her lover to Libya, and established there as queen of the continent of Africa, "the third part of Earth's expanse." But this tale of the origin of Cyrenè seems wholly unconnected, and, indeed, inconsistent with another, which tells how the country was originally peopled by Dorian immigrants from the island of Thera in the Ægean Sea, under the leadership of one Battus, whose descendants, named alternately Battus and Arcesilas, had ever since handed down the sovereignty of the colony from father to son in unbroken succession.

The name "Battus" signifies in Greek a "stammerer;" and it was said that the original founder of the colony had suffered from some impediment to speech, that he had consulted the Delphian oracle in hopes of a cure, and had been directed by the god to proceed to Libya, a country at that time hardly known to the most adventurous mariners of Greece. He obeyed the direction, and his faith was rewarded by a miracle. A lion met him in the deserts, and the sudden fright broke the string of his tongue. Thenceforth he spoke plain. According to this legend, then, the foundation of Cyrenè took place under the auspices of the Delphian oracle, and the Delphian god Apollo was supposed to view with especial favour the prosperity of the city, and the athletic and other distinctions of its citizens. Apollo was always considered as the chief patron-deity of Cyrenè. His temple occupied a conspicuous site in the town; processions in

his honour were for ever passing through its streets;* and the fountain in its midst was known as "the fountain of Apollo." This connection between Apollo and the distant Cyrenè naturally produced legends which should explain it. One such legend was that of Battus and his visit to Delphi; another was the tale already mentioned of the loves of Apollo and the nymph Cyrenè.

But there was a third local legend, unconnected with the name of Apollo, and carrying us back into a more remote antiquity,—a time prior to the origin of the Delphian temple. Jason and his Argonauts had passed, it was said, over the deserts of Libya. Their ship had been miraculously drawn for twelve days across the sands by Medea's magic spells, and they had at last reached the fountains of the lake Tritonis. Here they were greeted by a local deity, a son of Poseidon, who presented to one of the crew—the Lacedæmonian hero Euphemus—a clod of earth, telling him to treasure it, and convey it to his home. Had he done so, his descendants in the fourth generation would have obtained the sovereignty of Libya. But through some negligence on the part of Euphemus's followers the symbolic clod was allowed to fall overboard, and was carried by the tide to Thera. In consequence the descendants of Euphemus were not allowed to enter on their sovereignty in Africa till they had first colonised Thera; and thus it was from Thera instead of Laconia, and in the seventeenth instead of the fourth generation, that Battus, the

* Pyth. v. 90.

descendant of Euphemus, at last led his colonists to Cyrenè.

The first of these three legends—the loves of Apollo and the nymph Cyrenè—is charmingly told in the Ninth Pythian Ode. This poem is addressed to Telesicrates of Cyrenè, winner in the race of footmen in full armour.

Cyrenè, says the poet, was the daughter of Hypseus, a divinely-descended king of the Thessalian Lapithæ. He describes her as a heroine of Amazonian tastes and habits, such as Virgil afterwards portrayed in his famous description of Camilla,*—a mighty huntress, scorning the dull home-life of an ordinary Grecian maiden :—

"Small joy she found to guide the shuttle's tortuous round,
Or share the feasts, her home-pent mates that cheered.
But brazen javelins she threw,
And savage beasts with brandished falchion slew,
Making in restful peace to dwell
The cattle of her sire, and yielding scanty space
To Slumber's sweet embrace,
When on her weary eyes at dawn he fell."

Apollo saw her on her native mountains—

"As unarmed, unaided, she defied
And grappled fearless a lion fierce."

He consulted the wise old Centaur Chiron, and bore the nymph away to Libya's "golden halls," where she became his bride, and the mother of a heavenly progeny. And there, says Pindar, she reigns yet, and

* Æn. vii. 805.

shares the triumph which Telesicrates has brought to her city.

The introduction of this legend has a special appropriateness in this particular ode, if we may believe the statement of the commentators, that Telesicrates was about to bring home to Cyrene a bride from the mother country. And certainly the general colour and contents of the Ode make this supposition extremely probable. One chief idea seems to run through it all, the blessings of a lawful and prosperous love. Telesicrates is described as a beautiful and stately hero, an ideal bridegroom :—

"Full oft upon his victories
At Pallas' yearly feasts hath gazed each wondering maid,
And silently hath prayed
For spouse or son like Telesicrates."

The dialogue between Apollo and the Centaur dwells with infinite grace and tenderness on the inseparable connection between a pure love and modest reserve and delicacy. And in the conclusion of the Ode Telesicrates is reminded of another tale of happy love in the annals of his own family, how his ancestor Alexidamus had wooed and won a daughter of the Libyan Antæus, king of Irasa :—

"Whom many a kinsman lord of high degree,
And many a stranger sought, for fair of form was she.
And afire were all to bear away
Her golden-coronalled youth's fair fruit,
But her father had purposed a nobler suit."

Antæus had heard the old tale of Danaus, who bade

his daughters' suitors assemble in the Stadium of Argos, and race for their brides. This precedent he determined himself to follow :—

" His daughter's spouse the Libyan found
E'en thus. In rich array her place hard by the goal she took, the race
To guerdon ; and her sire proclaimed around,
Who clasped her first, should claim the prize.
Swift o'er the course Alexidamus flies,
And seized her hand in his, and bore
His bride through nomad hosts of horsemen, raining down
Full many a leaf and crown,
And many a triumph-plume was his before."

We pass now to consider the Fourth and Fifth Pythian Odes, which were both composed in honour of a single occasion, the victory gained at Delphi in the chariot-race by Arcesilas, king of Cyrenè. The victor was not himself present to witness his triumph, but was represented by his kinsman Carrhotus, who drove the successful chariot, and who probably commissioned Pindar to produce an Ode for performance at Cyrenè, at a festival which followed on his return thither. This Ode was the Fifth Pythian ; the fourth, as we shall see, was composed afterwards for a special purpose. Yet it is not unlikely that both Odes reached Arcesilas together, and were conveyed in the ship which brought Carrhotus home.

The Fifth Pythian opens with a lofty panegyric upon the power of wealth well used, and on the magnificent position of Arcesilas, at once a mighty monarch

and a victor at Pytho. The king is admonished never to forget how much of this glory he owes to two constant friends, the one a god, the other a mortal, Apollo and Carrhotus. Pindar dwells at considerable length on the skill and nerve exhibited by Carrhotus. The race had been singularly disastrous to the mass of competitors. No less than forty cars had been upset; the confusion and danger must have been indescribable. Yet Carrhotus had steered his chariot through the writhing mass of cars and horses, without so much as grazing a wheel or snapping a trace, and had reached the winning-post in triumph.

> "With calm strong purpose pressing on
> 'Mid forty fallen guiders of the rein,
> Secure through all did he his chariot guide,
> And from the games returned hath reached his home on
> Libya's plain."

Then follows a brief allusion to the legend of Battus, and to the rise of Cyrenè under the continual favour and protection of Apollo, to whom Arcesilas is taught to refer not only the material prosperity of his country, but all the enlightened and artistic civilisation which surrounds him, and the noble strains of minstrelsy which are the reward of his victory. The origin of the Carneian festival of Apollo at Cyrenè, the occasion on which the Ode was to be performed, is traced back to Thera, and thence to the Ægids of Sparta, with which illustrious house Pindar boasts a connection of his own family. Then returning to the subject of Battus, the poet describes the actual foundation of the

city Cyrenè, the growth of its splendid temples, the paving of the sacred road along which the festal procession mounts still to Apollo's sanctuary, and lastly, the tomb of the heroic founder, rising in solitary grandeur "behind the mart" of the city. Elsewhere are other tombs, each enshrining the remains of a Battiad monarch, and all these dead ancestors of Arcesilas share, "as far as dead men may," in the triumph of their descendant:—

"Apart—the tomb their portion—others rest,
Great kings, before
The palace, their achievements high
Besprinkled all with dews of song
Soft streaming from the festal throng.
These, lapt in earth, the tale of bliss partake,
And share their kinsman's well-won victory;
Who now youth's song to Phœbus of the golden lyre
must wake."

The Ode closes with a high encomium on the personal virtues of Arcesilas, and with a prayer for his continued good fortune. He is wise and eloquent beyond his years; bold as an eagle, strong as a fortress, cultured and skilful, a worthy subject of Apollo's favour. Pindar's language, however, seems to imply that he had formed this high opinion of Arcesilas rather on hearsay than on actual personal knowledge. It is improbable that Arcesilas had ever visited Greece; and it is at least questionable, in spite of the assertions of ancient commentators, whether Pindar had ever visited Cyrenè. Highly encomiastic as the Ode is, its compliments are of a somewhat vague and impersonal

character. Pindar addresses Arcesilas rather as the ideal king than as a beloved and well-known patron. We find in his language no traces of such an intimacy as undoubtedly existed between the poet and the kings of Syracuse and Agrigentum. Pindar's praises of Arcesilas were probably sincere: Carrhotus, the friend and kinsman of the young king, had doubtless drawn his picture in flattering colours. Yet, a few years later, we find the gross misrule of this very Arcesilas leading to his own ruin, and the final overthrow of the Battiad dynasty in Cyrenè.

The Fourth Pythian Ode is probably the very finest of all Pindar's extant works. It is by far his longest poem; indeed it is more than twice as long as any other Ode, and it exhibits from first to last, both in its plan and its execution, the most consummate skill of the poet. Pindar had a special reason for the elaborate care which he bestowed on the composition of this Ode, and it was a reason which did him honour. The poem was designed to serve a friend in need—to save him from the miseries of exile, and to recover for him the favour of his offended king.

Damophilus, a noble of Cyrenè and a member of the royal house, had for some unknown reason incurred the resentment of Arcesilas, and had been forced to flee his country. He took refuge, it would seem, in Thebes, and there formed a friendship with Pindar, whose pride in his own descent from the mythical house of Ægeus would doubtless make him ready to acknowledge a kinsman in the Ægid Damophilus. The exile had apparently long resigned all hope of

restoration to his native town, when the victory of Arcesilas suddenly opened to him a possibility—a bare possibility, it was true, but still a possibility—of a change in his fortunes. Pindar had been commissioned to address Arcesilas in a triumphal Ode. Might not the poet be induced to seize this favourable opportunity of saying a word in season on behalf of his unhappy friend? This hint of Damophilus's hopes was not lost on the generous Pindar, and its result was the composition of the Fourth Pythian Ode.

The rhetorical skill and tact exhibited by Pindar in pleading the cause of his friend would have done credit to the most accomplished professional advocate. The whole Ode is a connected argument of the most powerful and convincing character; yet it is not till the conclusion is reached, that it is perceived to be an argument at all. It opens with magnificent compliments to Arcesilas and Cyrenè; it proceeds to set forth in the most vivid and picturesque form a series of heroic legends recalling all the proudest memories of the house of Battus; it sketches a noble ideal of the true hero-king, and finds in Arcesilas the realisation of that ideal, the physician of his state, the restorer of times which are out of joint, the creator of that civil order which a fool can disturb, but which a wise man only can bring into being. Yet all the while, surely but secretly, in every compliment, in every myth, in every maxim, the poet is gradually paving the way towards his final conclusion,—that gentleness and not force is the true secret of greatness; that the ties of kinship should prevail over the memory of past quarrels; and

that the pardon and restoration of his erring but repentant kinsman would be the crown and consummation of the glorious career of Arcesilas, and a fitting continuation to the generous traditions of his heroic house. Perhaps the best parallel which modern literature presents to the scheme of this Ode is the famous speech of Mark Antony in Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar." The reader will remember with what infinite tact in that incomparable speech the orator prepares imperceptibly the minds of his hearers for the conclusion to which he desires to lead them, but which he does not venture to present to them till they are ready to receive it. Nay, the ultimate determination of the audience to avenge the death of Cæsar seems to come from themselves, rather than from the orator. So it is with this Ode. Pindar does not, even at the last, ask in plain terms for the pardon of Damophilus. He urges it, indirectly alone, by allegory and maxim; and finally he draws two pictures, exhibiting with incomparable force and pathos on the one hand the miseries of banishment, on the other the happy, tranquil, law-abiding life of the returned exile, repentant and forgiven. And he leaves it to the promptings of Arcesilas's own generous heart to convert this last picture into a glorious reality, to gladden Damophilus, and to bring honour upon himself.

The argument of the Ode falls naturally into three divisions; and these divisions, as has been pointed out by a German critic,* stand to each other precisely as the three members of a syllogism. First comes the

* Leop. Schmidt, Pindar's Leben u. Dichtung, p. 288.

legend of the early prophecies, which foretold the rise of the Cyrenaic kingdom, and of the mystic clod presented by the local deity to the Argonaut Euphemus. This legend embodies the first premiss of Pindar's syllogism. The rule of the Euphemids in Cyrenè is no usurped and brutal tyranny, but a legitimate and law-abiding sovereignty, sanctioned and ordained by Heaven. Next we have the myth of Jason, the central idea of which furnishes the poet with his second premiss—that true kingship exhibits itself not in violence, but in a certain winning grace and gentleness, which secure to the true-born ruler influence over his fellow-men and favour from the gods. Last comes the conclusion, enforced by easy allegory and indirect suggestion, but nowhere nakedly stated, that Arcesilas, the representative of the Euphemid monarchy, can afford to disdain the harsh methods of proscription and cruelty, by which a vulgar tyrant is forced to maintain his power.

The substance of the legend which occupies the first of these three divisions, the myth of Euphemus and the clod which symbolised his sovereignty, has been already given: and we may now pass to the second division—the story of Jason.

Jason's father Æson had been forcibly deprived of the sovereignty of the Thessalian town Iolcos by his crafty kinsman Pelias. Jason himself was only saved from death by the interposition of friends, who conveyed the child secretly to the cave of the Centaur Chiron. There he was trained in all heroic exercises, and thence on reaching manhood he returned to claim

his kingdom. On the way, in crossing a torrent, he accidentally lost a sandal. Pelias had been warned by an oracle "to beware of the One-sandalled Man," and now the mysterious warning was to be fulfilled. Suddenly the youthful hero appeared in the market-place of his native town. His aspect is thus described by the poet:—

"A hero dread, twin spears he bore, and twinfold guise of raiment wore,
For aptly to his wondrous limbs clove garb of Magnete clime,
Nor rains might pierce the pard-skin round him spread,
Nor his bright locks unshorn their bloom had shed,
But mantled round his shoulders broad! Swift to the market-place he strode,
And, testing all his dauntless mettle, stood
'Mid the gathering multitude."

The crowds gazed in wonder on such an apparition. Who could he be? Not Phœbus, surely, nor Ares. Was he some giant of old—Otus, Ephialtes, Tityus? Nay, they had perished long since. The mystery baffled all their surmises.

Suddenly, in hot haste, Pelias himself drove down from his palace—

"—Then spied, and shuddering knew too well what *single sandal* bound
The youth's right foot."

However, he dissembled his fear, and in a tone of assumed mockery inquired the lineage of the illus-

trious stranger. Jason answered courteously and simply; and then, turning from the king, inquired of the citizens where his father dwelt:—

"Trained in old Chiron's school I come, whose daughters
in their cavern-home,
Philyra and Chariclo—spotless maids!—my childhood
bred.
Now twice ten years fulfilled, nor tongue nor hand
Offending e'er, I seek my native land
To win the realm, where ruled of old my sire, — now
passed to alien hold
Unrighteously, for there did Zeus ordain
Æolus and his sons should reign.
Well I wot hath Pelias, led by jaundiced greed astray,
Torn from my sire perforce the land of his ancient sway.
And me; when light dawned on my opening eyes,
My parents mourning made for dread of that fierce lord,
and feigned me dead,
And so, 'mid funeral gloom, and women's cries,
Swathed me in purple bands, and darkling bare
At midnight from my home, to dwell 'neath Chiron's
fostering care.
Thus hear ye briefly gathered all my rede;
And show me now, good townsmen mine, the cradle of
my knightly line,
For sure no alien land is this to Æson's native seed!
Jason am I, the Centaur gave my name."

One would have expected that such a declaration would have sealed his death-warrant; but no—whatever Pelias felt, he concealed his resentment, and the youth reached his home unmolested—

"—He spake: and to his aged father came,
Nor came unknown,—to greet the boy, those time-worn
eyes plashed tears of joy,
For glad at heart was he, his son to find
Choicest bloom of humankind."

Five days were spent in feasting with his kinsmen, who flocked in from all sides to greet the returned prince. Then on the sixth day he revealed his purpose, and the assembled company sprang from their seats, and escorted Jason to the palace of Pelias.

The interview which followed between the usurper and the youthful claimant to the throne is described in one of the most dramatic passages in all Pindar. Instead of loud invective and rude recrimination, we find exhibited on both sides a perfect courtesy of language; coupled, however, on the part of Jason, with a fearless assertion of his just rights, and on that of Pelias with a crafty dissimulation, in which vague promises and concessions were dexterously nullified by conditions involving, as he hoped, the speedy destruction of his rival. The kingdom should be restored, but Jason must first undertake an enterprise, which was demanded by the duty of the family to its dead ancestor, Phrixus; he must recover from Æëtes, king of the distant Colchos, the Golden Fleece of the ram which had conveyed Phrixus over the Hellespont.

Then follows, in Pindar's most rapid and vigorous style, a sketch of Jason's famous Quest of the Fleece—the voyage of the Argo. The story is not told in detail after the fashion of an epic poem. It is presented

rather in a series of *tableaux*, each designed to bring out Pindar's conception of Jason as the ideal king, attaching men's minds to himself by the magical force of his innate royalty, "strong without rage," gentle, but irresistible. He draws the noblest heroes of Greece to join his expedition. They come, constrained, as it were, by a magic spell:—

"None might endure
To chew eld's cud, and lonely bide in safety at his mother's side!"

The very powers of nature minister to the young hero. The thunder roars approval as he quits the port; favouring winds bear him to the "inhospitable Euxine's mouth;" the clashing rocks, that stood as sentinels to destroy all entering ships, thenceforth remain fixed and harmless for ever. He reaches Colchos, and Medea, the weird daughter of Æëtes, succumbs to the same irresistible charm which everywhere attends the hero's progress.

Æëtes consented to restore the golden fleece, but, like Pelias, he coupled his consent with hard conditions. Jason must first yoke a team of magic fire-breathing bulls, and force them to plough a field. The king believed that the attempt to fulfil this condition would at once rid him of his unwelcome guest, but he knew not that his daughter's magic had made the guest invulnerable:—

"Then his plough of adamant Æëtes midst them sets,
While from his bulls the flames burst panting in yellow jets,

And, rending earth, their brazen hoofs rebound.
Yet these he yoked, with none to aid, and straight the
shapely furrows made,
And scored a fathom deep the loamy ground,
Then spake,—'This work accomplished, let the king
That rules yon barque win from me that immortal covering,
His be the fleece tasselled with gleaming gold.'

He spake, and Jason laid aside his saffron vest, and,
fortified
With trust in Heaven, his task began: nor feared the
flames, made bold
By his weird hostess' hest. The plough he grasped,
Round the bulls' necks constraining fetters clasped,
Smote with fierce goad each massy frame, and to his hard
task's ending came!
In speechless pain, yet groaning as amazed,
On his might Æëtes gazed."

But a new danger still awaited Jason. The fleece was guarded by a monstrous serpent, huge as the keel of a fifty-oared galley,

"Shaped amid the crash of steel."

Pindar hurries over this and the remaining points of the legend at a bound. "Time draws close," he cries—"I must hasten on. I know of a shorter path, and cannot linger on the beaten track!" The serpent was slain, he tells us, "by guile," and forthwith he conducts Jason on his homeward voyage, lingering for a moment to tell how the Argonauts touched at Lemnos, and how there their comrade Euphemus became parent of the princely race that now rules Cyrenè. To that race, he says, Apollo has promised

a kingdom without end,—and the title on which that kingdom rests is the wisdom and virtue of its possessors.

Thus closes the second division of the Ode, and now Pindar begins to point his moral. He addresses Arcesilas with an allegory, designed to show the vanity of attempting to crush a noble foe by severity. Oppression and misery can never destroy true greatness; the noble oak may be hewn to serve ignoble uses, or even burnt as firewood on the hearth, but it will still assert its inborn worth, still prove itself superior to all meaner timbers:—

> "E'en in decay it testifies its worth,
> Whether in flames it end on winter's hearth,
> Or, matched with comrade pillars tall, it prop a lordly palace wall,
> Painfully doomed in alien homes to toil,
> Banished from its native soil."

From this simple parable Pindar passes to exhortation. Let Arcesilas act the true king's part, to heal and not to widen the gaping wounds of his kingdom! Feeble hands can shake a nation's peace, but hard it is to restore the tottering fabric of civil order. A famous English writer has expressed the same idea in words which strikingly recall the language of the Theban poet:—

> "How easy it is to shed human blood! how much in all ages have wounds and shrieks and tears been the cheap and vulgar resources of the rulers of mankind! how difficult and how noble it is to govern in kindness, and to found an empire upon the everlasting basis of justice and affection! . . . To let loose hussars and to bring

up artillery—to govern with lighted matches, and to cut, and push, and prime,—I call this, not vigour, but *the sloth of cruelty and ignorance.* The vigour I love consists in finding out wherein subjects are aggrieved, in relieving them; . . . in the laborious, watchful, and difficult task of increasing public happiness by allaying each particular discontent." *

And then, at last, the poet ventures to introduce the name of Damophilus. He dilates upon his worth and his misfortunes—struggling, like Atlas, under the burden of a world of woes. Yet even the old foes of Zeus, the Titans, were at last forgiven by the god who had overthrown them. May not Damophilus hope for a like grace from Arcesilas?—

"Yet he prays, when to the dregs is drained his cup of ill,
Home to return once more, and oft by Apollo's rill
Give all his soul to joy;—there, 'mid the throng
Poetic of his townsmen, bear the carven lyre, their quiet share,
And never more or do or suffer wrong!"

And—adds the poet in conclusion—should this blissful vision ever be realised, the gratitude of Damophilus will for ever keep alive the memory of the victory of Arcesilas, and of the noble stream of Theban song which commemorated that victory, and restored the exile to his home.

One would fain hope that this splendid poem secured its generous object. But on this point history is silent. We only know that the warnings of the

* Sydney Smith—Letters of Peter Plymley, Letter ix.

poet did not avail to teach Arcesilas those lessons of prudence and moderation in dealing with the political troubles of Cyrenè, which might have been the salvation of the dynasty. Arcesilas perished; Battus, his son, died in exile; and Cyrenè became a republic.

CHAPTER X.

THEBES.—ÆGINA.

Four of Pindar's extant Odes are addressed to victors from his own native city, Thebes. These are, the Eleventh Pythian, and three out of the seven Isthmians — the first, the third, and the sixth. All, as might be expected, abound in indications of Pindar's deep attachment to his native city, and the interest which he felt in all events, at home or abroad, in which her weal was concerned. Yet, for several reasons, the frequent political allusions which these Odes contain tend rather to perplex than to enlighten us as to Theban politics in Pindar's age, and the part, if any, which the poet took in them. It so happens that we are unable to fix, with anything like certainty, the date of any one of these four Odes. It is not surprising, then, that commentators who have endeavoured to identify the events to which they seem to allude with historical occurrences known to us from other sources, should have come to widely different conclusions. Again, our existing evidences as to Theban affairs at this period are at once defective, and in many points mutually contradictory. And, for

obvious reasons, we cannot expect to find Pindar expressing himself fully and unreservedly on burning questions of contemporary politics. His allusions are necessarily guarded, and therefore frequently obscure. Still, amid all this obscurity, a few facts seem to emerge, which throw light on Theban history and on the political views of the poet.

One such fact is the existence, in Pindar's days, of a long and bitter struggle between contending factions at Thebes—a struggle which Pindar regrets, and would fain appease. We obtain frequent glimpses of the misfortunes which the overweening pride and ambition of a portion of the Theban aristocracy drew down upon themselves and their country. We hear of banishments, of great houses suffering a temporary eclipse of their greatness, of savage feuds, and apparently—in dark and mysterious hints *—of fratricidal murders, and stern reprisals on their authors. Of the selfish ambitions which produced these disastrous consequences the poet speaks with regret and with implicit condemnation; yet he never exults over their defeat. He admires and loves the illustrious Theban aristocracy; and though he deplores its faults, he feels the deepest pity for its misfortunes. He appears to seek a remedy for the evils of the time, not in the expulsion from the State of the members who had disturbed its peace, but in the general diffusion through the community (and especially the upper classes) of a tranquil, law-abiding spirit. In the

* So Boeckh explains the mythological matter of the Eleventh Pythian.

Eleventh Pythian he contrasts the solid advantages of "the modest mean," of peaceful unassuming citizenship with the treacherous enticements of "the tyrant's lot." And in the opening of the Third Isthmian he finds his highest type of political virtue in the noble who can rise superior to the temptations of his position :—

"If crowned with high success in glorious game,
Or with rich store of plenty blest,
Man yet can curb within his breast
The demon Pride. Oh, let his name
Sound proudly in his townsmen's high acclaim."—(S.)

The ideal of life, which he suggests to his hearers, and which he would fain realise in his own case, is to dwell—honoured and beloved—among fellow-citizens, in dignified but unassuming ease, and to die in peace, bequeathing an unsullied name to a posterity who should reflect in their own lives the virtues of their parent. Thus it was, he says, that the heroes of old, Iolaus, Castor, Polydeuces, won their title to divine honours,* and such is the lot in the hope of which he can look tranquilly forward to his own approaching end :—

"Now, thanks to Neptune! whose kind sway
Cheers with calm our clouded day.
Now will I bind my brow with wreaths, and sing.
Kind Heaven, no cloud of trouble fling
In wrath athwart my new-recovered peace!
So may I wait Death's calm release,
Wearing out my aged years
Until the destined day appears."†—(S.)

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* Pyth. ix. 59. † Isthm. vi. 37.

Of those whom a neglect of the principles which Pindar would instil into his townsmen had involved in faction and deserved calamity, he speaks not with anger but with sympathy. He pities their reverses, rejoices in any gleam of returning prosperity, and finds in their sad experiences lessons both of consolation and of warning. Thus he alludes to a member of a noble house who had so far compromised himself in the strife of parties as to be driven to flee his city and seek a new home in the neighbouring Orchomenus:*—

"On him, in storms of civil tumult wild
Shipwrecked, by every furious billow tossed,
Her bruised and battered child,
Orchomenus—a friendly host—
From the deep sea a willing welcome smiled.
Now hath his inborn fate
Lifted again his fall'n and sad estate,
And hard experience taught his soul to learn
The lore of prudent thought, her lesson sage and stern."—
(S.)

Domestic feuds and the calamities of individuals were not the only evils brought upon Thebes by the factions which disturbed her commmonwealth. Through them, also, the city found itself committed to a foreign policy disgraceful in itself and disastrous in its consequences. At that momentous period, when the rapid advance of Persian invasion summoned all patriotic Greeks to rally in defence of their common fatherland, the selfish and scheming oligarchy who were for the time supreme in Thebes flung themselves

* Isthm. i.

and their city into the arms of the invader. We learn from Thucydides that this ignoble course was deeply distasteful to a considerable section of the citizens; and we find in Pindar's poems much which leads us to suspect that he shared in this matter the sentiments of the opposition. But the conciliatory attitude which he adopts towards the jarring factions of his countrymen rarely allows him so much as to hint at this unwelcome and dangerous topic. The failure of Xerxes naturally brought about the destruction of his Theban partisans; but the punishment of the actual criminals did not free the city from the discredit in which they had involved it. Athens especially never forgave the defection which had wellnigh involved her in hopeless ruin. She bent all her energies to humiliate her faithless neighbour; she stirred the subject cities of Bœotia to revolt; and ultimately she shook the influence of the city to its foundations in the campaign which swept away the flower of the Theban nobility in the disastrous battle of Œnophyta.

It has been thought that Pindar alludes to this battle in the Sixth Isthmian, addressed to Strepsiades of Thebes, an uncle of whom, the poet tells us, had fallen on the field of battle in defence of his native town:—

> "Son of Diodotus, 'twas thine . . .
> For Thebes to yield thy young life's flowery pride.
> Amid the bravest to the front he flew,
> Where foemen pressed and hopes were few.
> There the fatal blow was dealt.
> Ah me! the speechless woe I felt."—(S.)

At the great battle of Platæa, where the retiring Persians made their final effort to crush the forces of Greece, the Theban oligarchs had been found fighting, with bravery worthy of a better cause, in the ranks of the invaders. A reference to this struggle has been suspected in the Third Isthmian :—

"But on their home in wrath the tempest leapt,
And from their hearth four hero-brethren swept."—(S.)

If the suspicion be correct, we may see in Pindar's language an illustration of the caution and tact with which he handles a perilous theme. The fall of the Theban oligarchs, fighting for their country's foes, is treated rather as an inevitable calamity than as the just penalty of their criminal schemes. The poet gazes on it with awe and pity. No word of reproach escapes his lips. He cannot defend the cause in which the warriors fell; but he buries their fault in silence.

Amid the clouds and gloom which hung over Thebes, the result of her disgraceful union with the enemies of Greece, one ray of light appears to console the patriotic poet. He dwells with eagerness on the sympathy, resting partly on national traditions, partly on community of interests, and not least, perhaps, on common fear and dislike of Athens, which, after the Persian troubles, grew up between Thebes and Sparta. He seems to have looked upon this friendship as offering to Thebes her best hope of recovering the position which she had lost. And it is probable that those mythical traditions of his own family, which were so constantly present to his fancy, gave him an additional

bias towards Sparta,—the state, with whose early fortunes the legends of his own ancestors, the Ægids, were so intimately associated. The sympathy, which he hails, and longs to strengthen, between Thebes and Sparta, is shadowed forth in his description of the legendary brotherhood-in-arms between the Spartan Castor and the Theban Iolaus. He describes their friendly rivalry in feats of strength, and represents them as standing out side by side in proud pre-eminence above the other champions of Greece, each the charioteer of a demigod, each victorious in all athletic contests:—

> "Numberless they bound
> With conquering wreaths their temples round.
> This,—my own native Dirce's boast of pride:
> That,—the heroic chief from famed Eurotas' side."—(S.)

This description occurs in the First Isthmian. Similarly, and doubtless for the same reason, these heroes are associated together in the Eleventh Pythian—

> "To greatness Iolaus grew, and Castor strong."

In the Sixth Isthmian, he enumerates among the legendary glories of Thebes, the assistance furnished by the Ægids to the founders of the Spartan kingdom. But, when this Ode was written, a cloud of disappointment seems to have overshadowed the bright hopes which he had once formed from the prospect of Spartan friendship. He hints that Sparta has forgotten the old claims of Thebes upon her love—

> "But ah! the grace of days of yore
> Falleth on sleep, and none remembereth more."—(S.)

In fact the Spartans proved but lukewarm friends to Thebes. Hearty support from Sparta might have averted the bitter humiliation of Œnophyta; but that support was withheld, and the Thebans found too late that they had leaned upon a broken reed.

The mythical glories of Thebes were out of all proportion to the importance of the city in later history. They carry us back into times before the Dorians had established themselves in Sparta, when Athens was not yet a city. Thebes and Argos were then the foremost powers in Greece; and the struggles between these two cities occupy in the earlier period of Greek mythology the same prominence which in the later period belongs to the Trojan war. The opening verses of the Sixth Isthmian contain a long list of the heroic memories of ancient Thebes, the birth-place of Heracles the greatest of all Greek heroes, of Dionysus the god of wine, of Tiresias the father of Grecian seership, of Iolaus—a favourite hero of Pindar's—the nephew and comrade of Heracles. There too we find mention of the "Sparti," the warrior-race who sprang from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, first founder of the city, and from whom sundry Theban families in Pindar's own day claimed descent. The closing scene of the Argive war, the repulse of Adrastus from before the walls of Thebes, is not forgotten: and the list closes with the legend of Pindar's own ancestors, the Ægids, who helped to found the Dorian sovereignty in Sparta.

References to this series of legends abound in our poet, but they are by no means confined to the Odes addressed to Theban conquerors. Indeed, in these latter

Odes, the element of local mythology, though never wanting, is on the whole less prominent than might have been expected, and takes the form of allusion rather than of narrative. The most important legendary episode which we find in them—that of Agamemnon's murder, and the revenge of Orestes on the assassins, in the Eleventh Pythian—is, in the form in which Pindar tells it, a Laconian legend, and has no connection with the mythology of Thebes. Possibly the contemporary troubles of his city may have to some extent distracted the attention of the poet from its past glories. Or he may have deemed these themes so familiar to his hearers, as to be sufficiently recalled to their memories by passing allusions. Whatever be the reason, it is certain that the chief passages in which Pindar dwells on Theban legends are to be found in Odes addressed to a foreign and not to a native audience.*

We have seen how eagerly the poet looked to Sparta, as the ally whose support was to save his unhappy city amid its troubles, present and to come. But there was another Grecian state towards which he seems to have been drawn by a yet stronger sympathy. His attachment to the island-community of Ægina was both personal and national. He was associated with many of its citizens by the ties of warm private friendship, strengthened, it would seem, by frequent and familiar intercourse. The memory of a fancied kinship had, even in historical times, united Thebes and Ægina

* *E.g.* Nem. i. and ix. Ol. ii. and vi. all addressed to Sicilian victors. The legends of Heracles often appear in Odes addressed to Æginetans—*e.g.* Nem. iii. Isthm. v.

more than once in close political alliance. And, in Pindar's favourite legends, members of the heroic Æginetan house of Æacus appeared, again and again, as the chosen friends and comrades of the Theban Heracles.

No less than eleven of Pindar's extant Odes * are addressed to Æginetan conquerors. In many of these he expresses what is evidently a warm and sincere admiration for the character of the people and their institutions; and his language as to the families of the victors often indicates the closest intimacy and friendship between himself and them.

The island of Ægina lies in the middle of the Saronic gulf, between the two great promontories of Attica and Argolis. It will be remembered that the Nemean festival was held in the latter district, and a large proportion of the Æginetan victories recorded by Pindar were obtained in the lists of Nemea. Ægina was a most conspicuous object in the view from Athens over the Saronic gulf; and it was in allusion to this, and to the long-standing jealousies which existed between the two states, that Pericles called Ægina "the eyesore of the Piræus." The natural features of the island were not specially attractive. It was somewhat bare and rocky. Such beauty as it possessed was due to the luminous clearness of its air, and the bold outlines of the mountain which formed its centre. But its buildings in Pindar's day were among the most magnificent in Greece; its harbour was filled with stately ships;

* These are—Ol. viii. Pyth. viii. Nem. iii. iv. v. vi. vii. viii. Isthm. iv. v. vii.

and its quays, swarming with foreign traders and loaded with bales of costly merchandise, presented a lively and exciting spectacle to the visitor from the inland towns of Greece. In the age which preceded the rise of Athens, Ægina had been the foremost naval power on the Greek side of the Ægæan Sea. To the Æginetan traders was ascribed the introduction into Greece of gold and silver coin, and of a uniform scale of weights and measures. The wealth of individual citizens seems to have been enormous, and it was lavished on public objects and the encouragement of art and athleticism. Remembering Pindar's views on this point, we do not wonder to find him describing Ægina as the model state, in which, above all others, his ideals of life were realised.

The bold and commanding situation of Ægina, and the crowds of strangers who flocked to its hospitable port, seem to have produced a strong impression on Pindar's imagination. Thus he says in the Eighth Olympian—

> "Heaven's command draws the sons of every land
> Around this isle, set in the girdling main
> As a pillar sublime."

In the Fourth Isthmian he addresses Ægina as "a tower, walled of old with high-climbing virtues," and so in the Fourth Nemean he describes the island as the "towering throne of the Æacids," where justice is ever ready to protect the stranger, "the light of all men's eyes." Himself a Dorian, he greets Ægina as a typical Dorian state :—

"Our Dorian home
Ægina's hospitable isle." *—(S.)

"From Æacus down that land have Dorians swayed." †

He dwells with admiration and sympathy on the culture of the Æginetans, on their zealous and successful athleticism, on their prowess in naval warfare:—

"Who clash the spear and love the song,
Training their youth to love alway
The glorious fray." ‡—(S.)

"Not banished from the Graces lies
His home, in all the virtues rare
Of Æacids that claimeth share.
No! from that righteous island's rise
Never-failing praise is hers, and songs her worth proclaim.
Oft have the heroes she has borne the crown of sportive contests worn,
Oft in rapid fight won fame." §

"Glad am I," cries the poet in the Fifth Nemean, "that all the state strives after glory;" and in the same Ode he calls the island, "a soil well loved of strangers, mother of valiant men, and glorious in ships."

At the beginning of the Persian troubles, when Darius invaded Greece, Ægina had disgraced herself by deserting the national cause, and associating herself with the foreigner. Consequently, when the invasion was over, Athens denounced the Æginetans before

* Nem. iii. 2.
† Ol. viii. 30.
‡ Nem. vii. 9.
§ Pyth. viii. 21.

assembled Greece, and the result was an invasion of the island by Sparta. But, in the renewal of the Persian attack by Xerxes, the Æginetans repaired their former fault by conspicuous devotion to the Grecian cause. Their island became the asylum of the expelled Athenians, and their splendid valour in the sea-fight at Salamis was rewarded, by common consent, with the first-fruits of the spoils. To this battle Pindar alludes in the Fourth Isthmian :—

> "Well may delivered Salamis attest,
> That by the might of Æginetan hands
> Old Ajax' city * stands."—(S.)

But the old enmity between Athens and Ægina broke out again after the close of the Persian wars. About B.C. 455 the Athenians besieged and took the capital of the island ; and at last, in B.C. 429, they occupied the country, expelled the inhabitants, and terminated for ever the rivalry which had so long imperilled their own naval supremacy in Greece. This latter catastrophe, however, was after the death of Pindar. He lived long enough to see the downfall of many a noble house whose achievements he had sung ; but he was spared the keener grief of witnessing the final ruin of his favourite Ægina.

Tradition derived the names of Thebes and Ægina from two sister-nymphs, Thebe and Ægina, daughters of Asopus. On the strength of this mythical connection, the Thebans had once actually invoked the Æginetans, as their next of kin, to join them in a war

* *i.e.* Salamis.

against Athens. Strange as it may seem, the appeal was successful; and the Æginetans—though at that time in alliance with Athens—responded first by sending to the Theban leaders the sacred effigies of their own native heroes the Æacids, and ultimately by themselves attacking the Athenians, without even waiting to make a formal declaration of war against them. Pindar alludes to this legend as a bond of connection for all time between members of the two states:—

> "Great joy the loyal Theban fills
> When thy high praise, Ægina, is his theme.
> For twin were old Asopus' virgin daughters." *—(S.)

And in the Fourth Nemean he describes the men of Thebes as welcoming the young Æginetan athlete, Timasarchus, as "a friend among friends for Ægina's sake."

But the legends of Ægina, on which beyond all others he prefers to dwell, are those associated with its great heroic house, the Æacids:—

> "A mighty spell my soul constrains,
> Whene'er my step this glorious island treads,
> With voice of hymns, like dewy rains,
> To cherish the Æacid heroes' deeds." †—(S.)

And, in fact, in every single Ode which Pindar addressed to victors from Ægina, we find some mention of the house of Æacus, and usually a detailed account of some incident in its legendary history.

This Æacus was said to have been a son of Zeus

* Isthm. vii. 17. † ib. v. 19.

and the nymph Ægina, the most pious of mortals, and the first ruler of the island which bore his mother's name. Among his descendants were numbered many of the most famous heroes of antiquity—Peleus and Telamon, Achilles, Ajax, and Neoptolemus. The adventures of these supplied the poet with a copious stock of legendary material. He tells how Æacus assisted the gods Poseidon and Phœbus in building the walls of Troy; how Zeus and Poseidon—rival lovers of the sea-nymph Thetis—agreed to surrender her to a mortal husband, and selected Peleus as the mortal worthiest of such an honour. He describes the valour and untimely deaths of Ajax and Neoptolemus, the training of young Achilles in the cave of the Centaur Chiron, and the exploits by which he fulfilled the ancient prophecy that Thetis should bear a child more mighty than his father. And he dwells with especial pleasure on the tales which represented the Æacid Telamon as the chosen friend and comrade of the Thebans, Heracles and Iolaus, as foreshadowing the later alliances in war of the two sister-communities, Thebes and Ægina.

But to recapitulate in full all the countless legends of Ægina and the Æacids, as Pindar himself says, would but weary the reader.* A few selected passages will suffice to give us an idea of the poet's treatment of these stories in the various Odes which he has addressed to Æginetan victors.

Here is a strophe from the Third Nemean, describing the childhood of Achilles:—

* Pyth. viii. 12. cf. Isthm. v. 56.

"In mighty deeds the boy Achilles played,
Still homed in Chiron's fostering shade:
The steel-tipped spear he threw,
Swift as the wind the roaring lion slew!
He tamed the tusky savage of the wild,
Then laid each grim expiring brute
Down at the mighty Master's feet, and smiled.
So wrought the six years' child!—Diana mute
Beheld with wondering joy,
And great Athene gazed upon the wondrous boy."—(S.)

From Pindar's frequent enumerations of the same hero's later exploits we may select the following:*—

"Soon the voice of Bards with loud acclaiming
Told how by young Achilles slain,
Amid the vines on Mysia's plain,
The blood of vanquished Telephus was streaming.
He won Atrides' ravished bride,
He bridged wide Ocean for their safe return,
He dashed to earth the Trojan pride,
Which fain had curbed the prowess stern,
The spear which thundering from afar
Marshalled the mighty wave of dreadful war.
Fell Hector in the unequal fight,
Fell the great Memnon's swarthy might;
To many a chief of noble fame
He oped the gloomy gate of Proserpine."—(S.)

In the Fifth Isthmian, Heracles is described as visiting Telamon, and praying that a noble son may be born to his friend. Pointing to the memorial of his own supreme achievement, the hide of the Nemean lion which hung on his shoulders, he asks that the spirit of that mighty monster may revive in the child of

* Isthm. vii. 47.

Telamon. The prayer is heard, and Zeus sends down his messenger, the eagle, to betoken his approval. The child is born, and receives a name recalling the portent which heralded his birth—"Aias," *the Eagle*—a name more familiar to us perhaps in its Latinised form as "Ajax."

"'Twas at the Island-Chieftain's lordly feast
The high heroic summons came—
Stood in the portal high a godlike guest.
No need to name his name
Who wore the lion's hide, and brindled mane.
With eager cheer, and welcome fain,
Great Telamon the guest to greet
Reached forth a bowl of nectar sweet,
A bowl all beauteous to behold
Foaming with wine, and rough with sculptured gold,
And loudly bade the hero pour
The rich libation on the sacred floor.
His conquering hands he lifted high,
And called the Sire, the Ruler of the Sky.
'If ever from my lips, Paternal Jove,
Thou heardest vow in love,
Grant me, my chief, my dearest prayer!
Be born of Eribœa's womb a boy,
His noble father's noble heir,
And crown his happy lot with perfect joy!
His be the unconquered arm in fight,
Might, like this lion's might,
In Nemea's vale which my first prowess slew;
And as his might, his courage!'—At the words,
Swooped from the sky the king of birds.
With keenest joy his father's will he knew.
Then spake he in a prophet's solemn tone:
'The son thou cravest shall be thine,
And be his noble name, my Telamon,

Called from yon bird divine.
Wide as the eagle's be his monarch-sway;
Swoop he as eagle on his prey.'"—(S.)

Pindar describes with enthusiasm the exploits of Ajax in the Trojan war, and mourns over the hero's self-inflicted death. He had asserted his just claim to inherit the arms of Achilles. But the jealousy of the Greek chiefs and the cunning of Odysseus conspired successfully against the cause of right, and Ajax, baffled and maddened, fell upon his own sword :—

"'Twas bitter, envious hate
That on his buried sword great Ajax flung :
The hero strong of arm, unskilled of tongue,
Must bow to base defeat.
Artist of glozing lies, Laertes' son
The golden armour won :
The stealthy vote the dark injustice sped,
And baffled Ajax bled." *—(S.)

In the Seventh Nemean, Pindar's sympathy with Ajax leads him for once to question the veracity of Homer.† He hints that as the craft of Odysseus (Ulysses) perverted the judgment of Ajax's contemporaries, so have the ignorant public of a later age been misled by the craft of Homer. As in life, so after death, Odysseus has received more than his due, and Ajax less.

Further on, in the same Ode, Pindar alludes to the melancholy fate of Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, slain in a brawl with the priests of Delphi :—

"On the sacred floor
His blood the sworded priest 'mid the meat-offering shed."
—(S.)

* Nem. viii. 23. † ib. vii. 20.

But even this catastrophe, says the poet, was designed by Fate to add new glories to the house of Æacus. The murdered Neoptolemus received heroic honours in Delphi; his spirit thenceforth abode in the sanctuary, and presided as arbiter over the Pythian contests:—

"It was decreed
That in Apollo's ancient shrine
Our hero of the Æacid line
Should hold his bed divine.
So 'mid the blaze of many an altar-flame,
'Mid the high pomp and choral glee,
When the great Pythian combat came,
Should his high soul the righteous umpire be."*—(S.)

The famous myth of the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis appears frequently in these Odes:—

"High was that nuptial banquet, where, in pride,
Sat on their orbed thrones the Lords of Heaven,
The Lords of Heaven and Lords of Sea.
And gifts of power and sovereignty
By each great guest to his high race were given."†—(S.)

Apollo and the Muses appeared to sing the "hymenæal" chant:—

"The nuptial strain the beauteous Muses sang,
What time, amid the goddess-choir,
With golden quill Apollo struck the seven-stringed lyre."‡
—(S.)

In the Third Nemean, Telamon, brother of Peleus, appears as the friend of the Theban Iolaus:—

* Nem. vii. 44. † ib. iv. 66.
‡ ib. v. 41.

"He, comrade brave and true,
With conquering Iolaus slew
The steely-shafted host of Amazons."—(S.)

Æacus, the great ancestor of all these heroes, is introduced in the Eighth Olympian, in connection with the remarkable legend of the building of Troy. He came, summoned by Apollo and Poseidon, to aid them in this task. The assistance of a mortal was necessary, for Fate required that Troy should one day perish; yet perish it could not if it consisted wholly of the imperishable work of immortal gods. Accordingly, Æacus was summoned to supply a perishable element in the walls of the new city:—

"Foredoomed of Fate, from its embattled tower,
When war's fell affrays
Should in havock outblaze,
Ruin's lurid fumes to pour." *

Suddenly a portent appeared, shadowing the fate of Troy:—

"Up-leaped upon the city's new-built wall
Three sheeny snakes. Two back in ruin thrown
Crashed suddenly, and perished in their fall:
One rushed exulting on."

Apollo explained the portent. Descendants of Æacus should assault and take the city, breaching its walls in the only place where a breach was possible —the portion reared by his own mortal hands. By the two snakes which fell baffled from the ramparts Pindar appears to have signified the Æacids, Achilles

* Ol. viii. 33.

and Ajax. Each endeavoured to take the city—each perished before its walls. The third snake undoubtedly represents the son of Achilles, Neoptolemus, by whose assistance the ten-years' siege was at last successfully concluded.

And here we will, at last, take our farewell of the legends of the Æacids, and of the Odes to Æginetan victor in which they are embodied.

CHAPTER XI.

ATHENS.—CORINTH.—ARGOS.—OPUS.—ARISTAGORAS OF TENEDOS.

Remembering the tradition of Pindar's friendly relations with the Athenians, one is a little inclined to wonder that only two of his extant Odes, and those among the least important in the whole collection, are addressed to Athenian victors. Nor does it appear that any of the lost Isthmian Odes came under this category. It is probably useless to attempt an explanation of the circumstance; but it certainly deserves explanation, if such were possible.

Not less remarkable is the silence of these two Odes as to the stirring events of contemporary Athenian history. The Seventh Pythian, written apparently just after the great battle of Marathon, makes not the faintest shadow of an allusion to that crowning glory of Athenian history. And the Second Nemean, composed soon after the victory at Salamis, does, indeed, mention Salamis, but actually without a hint that the place was known to fame in any other capacity than as the birthplace of Ajax! Yet we know that Pindar was profoundly interested in the magnificent exploits of

the Athenians during their struggle against Persia. He can find no higher praise for Hiero's victory at Himera than to compare it with the Athenian triumph at Salamis. A fragment * has been preserved from a lost poem referring to an occasion "when the sons of Athenians laid the bright foundation of freedom for the Greeks." And in writing to an Æginetan victor,† he loudly applauds the part taken by Ægina in the fight at Salamis. But to Athenian victors he writes twice. Each time the Athenians were exulting in a great recent victory; and each time Pindar leaves the victory unmentioned.

We can perhaps explain his silence in the one case; in the other it must remain an unsolved riddle. The Seventh Pythian was addressed to Megacles, a member of the noble Alcmæonid family; and it was gravely suspected that the sympathy of this family with the expelled Athenian tyrant Hippias, who fought and (as some say) fell on the Persian side at Marathon, had not merely made them lukewarm in their country's cause, but had led them into actual treachery. Whether this suspicion was true or false, it produced a feeling of no little odium against the Alcmæonids; and the events of Marathon would naturally long remain a sore subject with members of the family, reminding them rather of their own discredit, whether deserved or no, than of the glory of their city. But as to the Second Nemean, we have no knowledge of the victor's family which will enable us to explain Pindar's obviously intentional silence on the subject of the sea-fight at Salamis.

* Fr. 93 (Boeckh). † Isthm. iv. 49.

In both Odes the element of mythology is conspicuous by its absence; and indeed neither Ode contains any feature of special interest, except, perhaps, the allusion in the Seventh Pythian to the restoration (in B.C. 512) of Apollo's temple at Delphi. Some exiled members of the Alcmæonid family, who had contracted to build its front with common Porine stone, substituted for this, at their own expense, a *façade* of costly Parian marble:—

> "Ay, sounded are they through all the lands,—
> Those labours of Erecthid hands,
> On Pytho's steep divine
> Rearing Apollo's shrine!"

The Second Pythian is the merest sketch of an Ode, and contains nothing that requires quotation.

Very unlike these trifles is Pindar's only Ode to a Corinthian victor, the Thirteenth Olympian, addressed to Xenophon, a member of the great aristocratical house of the Oligæthids, who had achieved a success which Pindar describes as unparalleled—victory both in the foot-race and in the Pentathlum.* This fine poem contains the principal account in ancient literature, if we except a passage in Homer, of the adventures of the great Corinthian hero Bellerophon. We hear how he toiled in vain to tame the winged horse Pegasus, till Pallas appeared in a vision and presented him with a golden bridle:—

> "The powers of Heaven can lightly deign boons that Hope's self despairs to gain:

* A combination of five distinct sports—as leaping, javelin-throwing, &c.

And bold Bellerophon with speed won to his will the
winged steed,
Binding that soothing spell his jaws around.
Mounting all mailed, his courser's pace the dance of war
he taught to trace,
And, borne of him, the Amazons he slew,
Nor feared the bows their woman-armies drew,
Chimæra breathing fire, and Solymi,—
Swooping from frozen depths of lifeless sky.
Untold I leave his final fall!—
His charger passed to Zeus' Olympian stall."

Other legendary glories of Corinth find place in this Ode—the invention of the *Aëtoma*, an important feature in Greek architecture; the introduction of the Dionysiac festival, and of the Dithyramb which accompanied it; the prowess of Glaucus, king of Lycia, a descendant of Bellerophon; the tales of Sisyphus and Medea. And the poem ends with a long enumeration of Oligæthid victories, and anticipations of others yet to come. At Nemea and the Isthmus alone they had triumphed *sixty* times! Pindar's statement is positive; but he feels that it sounds incredible, and appeals for confirmation to the sworn heralds who had proclaimed these victories. Yet this was not all.

"Well, ere now, my song hath told
Of their Olympic victories;
And what shall be, must coming lays unfold.
Yet hope have I,—the future lies
With Fate,—yet bless but Heaven still their line,
Ares and Zeus shall all fulfil! For, by Parnassus' frowning hill,
Argos, and Thebes, their fame how fair! And oh, what
witness soon shall bear,

In Arcady, Lycæus' royal shrine!
Pellene, Sicyon, of them tell,—Megara, and the hallowed dell
Of Æacids; Eleusis; Marathon bright;
And wealthy towns that bask 'neath Ætna's height;
Eubœa's island. Nay, all Greece explore,—
Than eye can see, you'll find their glories more!
Through life, great Zeus, sustain their feet;
And bless with piety, and with triumphs sweet!"

An extremely fine Ode, also, is the Tenth Nemean, to Theæus of Argos, the only champion from that city whose triumph is recorded by Pindar. As has been already stated, Argos was in ancient times one of the greatest powers in Greece,—unrivalled save by Thebes. Naturally her legendary memories were of especial splendour. Perseus and the Gorgon; Epaphus, the supposed founder of great cities in Egypt; Diomede, the Argive champion in the Trojan war—hardly inferior as a warrior to Achilles himself; Adrastus and Amphiaraus, one the leader, the other the associate-prophet, of the Seven Champions in the famous expedition against Thebes; Amphitryon, the step-father of Heracles, who had been trained in Argos to feats of arms;—such were the myths which at once presented themselves for the poet's choice, as he approached the theme of an Argive's victory.

None of these legends are neglected by Pindar, but he throws his main strength into another, and surely a most beautiful myth, connected, though remotely, with the family traditions of his patron, the myth of Castor and Pollux.

These heroic brethren were twins, alike in all points save one—Pollux was immortal, his brother a mere man. To save Castor from death, Pollux voluntarily resigned to him the half of his own immortality, and thenceforward the brethren passed alternate periods of life in heaven and death in the sepulchres of their native Therapne.

"To them in turn the lot is given
For one short day to taste the bliss of Heaven,
Guest of the gods around the throne of Jove;
The next, in dark Therapne's grove,
The silence of the tomb—the lot of man—to prove.
So blent in wondrous love, the godlike pair
One fortune share.
For such the lot immortal Pollux chose,
What time to his free choice 'twas given
To live the life of gods in heaven,
Or share his brother's woes."—(S.)

The struggle in which Castor fell is described with great vigour and picturesqueness of detail. The Twins were returning from a successful foray against their neighbours Lynceus and Idas, two brothers who in other legends appear as comrades of Jason in his voyage to Colchos. They lay down to rest beneath an oak, but Lynceus (keenest-eyed of mortal men) saw them from a distant mountain height, and hastened with his brother to revenge the raid. Castor was soon overpowered, but—

"Not long their triumph: on the twain
Came the dread wrath of Jove amain;
Jove willed: each warrior fell!
For deathless Pollux all afire

Rushed on the foe to wreak his vengeance dire.
They from the tomb, where lay their buried sire,
The pillared stone that decked the grave uptore:
And, as the dread avenger came,
The mighty mass—his speed to tame—
Full on his breast the brethren bore.
In vain! nor bruise nor blow the hero knew:
Nor might the huge and flying rock
One moment check the furious shock
Which pierced sad Lynceus through.
The bolt of Jove laid Idas low.
There lay the brethren dead in lonely woe."—(S.)

Pollux hastened back to his fallen brother, and found him in desperate case:—

"Not yet the thrall of stiffened death,
But shuddering with short gasp of weak and struggling breath."—(S.)

With passionate tears, Pollux besought Zeus to take back the cruel gift of immortality, and let him share his brother's death. The god appeared, and offered him another favour. Let him balance two alternative lots, and make his choice. If he would reign for ever as a god in heaven—so should it be!

"But if thou still
Art bent with fond fraternal care
Thy brother's lot in all to share,
I grant thy love its will:
Half of thy days to thee the lot is given
Deep in the silent earth to breathe
The dark and joyless life of death,
And half—to reign in heaven."—(S.)

"No doubt," says Pindar, "clouded the hero's mind." In an instant his choice was made, and forthwith

> "From Castor fell
> From eye and tongue the prison-bonds of hell."—(S.)

So ends this charming legend of fraternal affection, and with it the Ode reaches a worthy close.

Among Pindar's more important Odes must be reckoned also the Ninth Olympian, addressed to Epharmostus, a Locrian of Opus in Northern Greece. Four distinct Greek communities bore the name of Locrians, three in Greece proper and one in Italy. Opus, however, was regarded as the cradle of the whole Locrian stock, and its inhabitants claimed a certain pre-eminence among their brethren in consequence. Yet they never attained a position of much consideration among the States of Greece. Their country was rich and beautiful, but its inhabitants were little distinguished in the arts of war or peace. In the struggle against Persia their attitude was wavering and undignified. We find them first submitting to the invaders, then flocking to join Leonidas in Thermopylae, and lastly at the critical moment retiring from that dangerous post. The Locrians of Opus, however, were not without traditions of a glorious past which consoled them for their present insignificance. And naturally it is in these traditions that Pindar finds his chief materials for a panegyric upon Opus.

The Ode was clearly intended as a specimen of the poet's best and most careful work. Pindar expresses, in its opening, his intention to produce a lay more

worthy of Epharmostus's triumph than the antique and simple strains of Archilochus, which had been deemed sufficient to greet it on the actual occasion of its achievement. And in a similar tone he proceeds to describe its purposed character :—

"His city dear will I adorn
With fiery songs of loudest strain.
Swifter than noblest courser borne,
Or sail-fledged ships that cleave the main :
Afar will I the tale recite.
If, Graces sweet, 'tis mine in humblest share
To cull the blossoms of your garden rare—
For yours is all that charms : and Heaven sends skill and might."

From this prelude he dashes at once into the world of mythology with a tale of "war in heaven"—Heracles resisting the combined assault of Apollo, Hades, and Poseidon. But the introduction of this legend is a "feint." The poet is purposely delaying the myths which are to form the real substance of the Ode, in order to introduce them at last with greater effect. And soon in one of his favourite bold transitions he reveals his scheme. "Quit such theme, tongue of mine!" he cries, and springs forthwith to the local legends of Opus,—the tale of Deucalion's deluge, and of the glorious reign of a mythical prince, to whom the Opuntian Locrians loved to trace the name of their city, Opus, the son of Zeus by a princess of Elis, who afterwards became the wife of the Locrian monarch Locrus. The following is Pindar's version of the well-known legend of Deucalion, who with his wife Pyrrha escaped the deluge

that had overwhelmed his contemporaries, and who, by casting stones behind him in obedience to the directions of an oracle, had peopled Locris with a new race called *Laians*, from the Greek word LAAS, "a stone."

"Where led of Zeus, that hurls the lightnings bright,
Down from Parnassian heights Deucalion came
With Pyrrha, Man's primeval home to frame,
And there, sans travail, won
Descendants sprung from stone,
'Laians' thence named. Let these inspire your voice;
And of old wine, but new-blown song make choice!
For earth, 'tis told in story, sank
Whelmed 'neath a dark and raging main,
But sudden, cleft of Zeus, she drank—
The swollen surge was pent again!"

Then follows the tale of Opus's birth, and of the heroes who flocked to his court, foremost among whom was Menœtius, the famous father of a yet more famous son —Patroclus, the friend of Achilles.

"Him that went
With Atreus' sons to Troy, sole faithful found
To wronged Achilles, when the fleet around
'Mid rout of valiant Greeks
Raged Telephus. Still speaks
His fame, and wise men know Patroclus' might
Thenceforth, amid the crash of furious fight
The son of Thetis bade him stand
The nearest ever to his side,
Sheltered of his victorious brand."

The poet professes himself willing to linger for ever on such themes; but the immediate occasion of the Ode must not be forgotten, and so he proceeds to enumerate the athletic successes of Epharmostus and his

kinsman Lampromachus, dwelling especially on one scene of triumph, which he seems himself to have witnessed.

> "But oh, when now to manhood newly grown
> He sought the silver prize in Marathon,
> And there with footing true
> And rapid feint o'erthrew
> Each senior tried, what shouts rang round to greet
> The fair young hero of so fair a feat!"

Lastly, Pindar enlarges on a favourite thesis of his philosophy of life, that glory is no external good to be grasped at by every chance aspirant, but the visible outcome of an innate capacity for greatness vouchsafed by Providence to certain favoured mortals. Ambition in inferior natures is presumption, a rash intrusion upon a sphere into which they have no right to enter. In contrast to such, Pindar describes the nature which may lawfully aspire to glory, and finds it exemplified in Epharmostus:—

> "The victor, graced with blessings from on high,
> Strong arm, lithe limb, and spirit-speaking eye,
> Whose hand at Ajax' feast* the Ilian altar crowned."

We have now noticed all the extant Odes which Pindar has addressed to conquerors at the Four Great Games, and those also which—though really referring to successes in minor competitions—have been mistakenly included in the Pythian or Nemean group, and have thus by a happy accident escaped unmerited oblivion.

* The Ode was performed at a festival of the local hero Ajax, son of Ileus or Oileus.

We have to thank a similar accident for the preservation of the one extant Ode of Pindar which was not composed to celebrate an equestrian or athletic triumph — the so-called Eleventh Nemean — the Installation Ode (to which reference has more than once been made), for Aristagoras, "President" of Tenedos. Aristagoras had been in his day a distinguished athlete, and the frequent allusions of the Ode to his successes have occasioned the mistake which has preserved it.

The closing stanzas of this poem—like those of the Ninth Olympian described above—afford a specimen of Pindar's quasi-philosophical speculation on the problems of life. If the attainment of success be the result of an innate and inherited capacity for success, how comes it that the annals of a given family contain the record of failures as well as of successes? This difficulty Pindar meets with the favourite argument of poets — an analogy. The procreative capacities of Nature do not operate continuously through time: summer alternates with winter, fields lie fallow in certain years, blossom succeeds to bud, and fruit to blossom. So is it with the inborn gifts, which at stated intervals generate success.

"But not in every age successive born
Doth its full strength ancestral virtue show,
Nor year by year with crops of golden corn
Doth the rich furrow glow;
Nor are the laden trees unfailing drest
With their sweet burthen hour by hour,
Swoln bud and fragrant flower,
But all alike they own alternate wealth and rest.
E'en so alternate is the race of man."—(S.)

Thus does Pindar give a consolatory turn to the old simile of Homer, "The race of man is as the race of leaves." Other ancient poets adapted it to teach a gloomier lesson, the shortness and misery of life. This was all that Mimnermus * saw in it, when he expanded it into an elaborate and melancholy allegory; or Simonides, † when he applauded and quoted it in condemnation of the Fallacies of Hope. Pindar's doctrine is more cheerful, and more unselfish. He sees that the leaves fall, but he remembers that the tree will bud again. The individual aspirant to fame may fail, but the poet consoles him with the hope that he may live again in his descendants, and triumph in the reflected glories of their successes.

* Fr. 2 (Bergk). † ib. 85 (Bergk)

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Great as was the contemporary success of Pindar's poetry, unanimously as the ancient and modern world alike have admitted his claim to rank among the most famous names of literary history, it may be doubted whether his works were ever really popular in any age but his own. It would be easy to prove by a long list of extracts from Greek and Roman writers, especially the latter, that his was a great name in the classical world: but it is surprising how seldom these laudations imply any real familiarity with the writings which are their subject, or even prove that their authors had ever read a single poem of the Theban bard. "The thunderous utterance of Pindar," "the Theban trumpet-blast," "the swan of Dirce," and so forth, were to them simply convenient periphrases for Lyric poetry in general, and their praises of his genius are expressed chiefly in a lavish employment of such epithets as "divine" or "sublime" or "inimitable." One or two Pindaric saws did indeed find their way into the commonplaces of ancient literature, and are quoted again and again by learned and unlearned

writers of every period. And certain obvious merits and characteristics of his poetry were pointed out by every professor of literature in the schools of Greece or Rome, and furnished a supply of materials for a panegyric, which any writer who chose could work up and expand at pleasure. But we find nothing to make us believe that Pindar was widely read among men of average culture among the ancients. When a poet is really popular in any age, the general literature of the age is certain to supply proofs of his popularity. Quotations, intended or unintended, from his works abound in the pages not only of rhetoricians and poets, but of philosophers and sober historians. The general interest in him is shown by unprofessional criticisms on particular details—often original and sometimes permanently valuable—which meet us from time to time in the most unexpected quarters. Nothing of this kind happens in the case of Pindar. Minute students like Dionysius of Halicarnassus* compile elaborate lists of the merits which a close and painful analysis has revealed to them in his writings. Rhetorical men of letters like Quintilian† favour the general public with a select edition of these catalogues, removing a portion of their technicalities, and presenting the residuum in a lively and striking form. But this is nearly all. Even the oft-quoted panegyric of Horace‡ upon Pindar, with its famous images of the "mountain-torrent swollen by winter rains," and the "swan borne aloft by shifting breezes to the cloud-fields be-

* Dionys. p. 420 (Reiske's edition).
† De Inst. Or. x. i. ‡ Odes, iv. 2.

yond," proves only that Horace had grasped the current idea of Pindar's merits, and was acquainted with the Alexandrian classification of his poems. Horace's own poetry owes much to Greek lyrists of another school —to Alcæus, and Sappho, and Archilochus—but little or nothing to Pindar. And the rare occurrence and universal failure of any attempt to revive the forms of Pindaric poetry in Latin literature needs more explanation than is supplied by Horace's parallel between the imitator of Pindar and the rash Icarus "soaring on wings of wax." No risk of failure would have deterred the poets of Rome from imitating a really popular Greek classic. Homer's name stood higher with them than even Pindar's; but Homer was popular, and therefore he was imitated.

We need not wonder that then, as now, the fame of Pindar should have exceeded the popularity of his poetry. Whatever elements of permanent value that poetry may contain, it contains also, beyond question, much which could have little value for any but its original audience. In so far as it appealed to sentiments which were peculiar to its own age, and which succeeding ages were neither able nor desirous to revive, it diminished its power of interesting and attracting future readers. That kind of genius which consists in an intense perception of the spirit of its age, and in responding promptly to its demands, tends often actually to disqualify its possessor for posthumous popularity. And having found that Pindar possessed this kind of genius in an extraordinary degree, that he was able and willing to throw his

whole soul into the expression of thoughts and the satisfaction of aspirations which were the very life and breath of his own generation, but of his own generation only, we see precisely in this fact the explanation at once of his success and of his failure. Over the minds of his contemporaries his influence was unequalled; but the very qualities which attracted them, repelled—and still repel—the men of other ages.

Still more does Pindar surrender his prospects of an abiding popularity, when—as sometimes happens—he addresses himself deliberately, not merely to the peculiar spirit of his times, but to developments of it which were limited to a select few in even a contemporary audience. How could poetry remain popular which its author designed to be

> "Of meaning to the wise, but to the horde
> Dark riddles"? *

Yet we find, amid all our poet's obscurities, passages which seem to demand immortality,—thoughts into which all minds can enter, passion which all hearts can feel, beauties which all eyes can see. Soon, it is true, the spirit of his age reasserts its influence: and the theme which was inspiring him with poetry that should have been "a joy for ever," is abandoned in favour of some topic of absorbing interest to himself and to his audience, but of none to "them that come after." Yet an impression remains of amazement at the powers which have for a moment been revealed·

* Ol. ii. 85.

and as we realise what Pindar's poetry might have been, we scarcely venture a criticism on what he has chosen that it should be.

The quality in that poetry which seems to have most impressed the ancients, is one of which a modern reader and a foreigner can scarcely judge. Nor, probably, should we be inclined to accept their estimate of its importance. They praised him chiefly as "the most sonorous of poets." * Such a quality was no doubt all-important as long as his poetry retained its original connection with Music and the Dance, but hardly longer; and as it must necessarily disappear in the process of translation, it cannot be a recommendation of the Odes to an English reader. Some idea, however, of Pindar's mastery over the mere form of poetry can be derived even from translations. His extraordinary rapidity in conveying his conceptions to his audience, the ingenuity with which he finds—if we may borrow an expression of his own—the shortest cut from one thought to another;—these, though they may begin by perplexing us, will assuredly end in pleasing us. Nor can we fail, in the end, to admire his fearless grasp of details from which an ordinary poet would shrink, the calm confidence with which he sets himself to present the most prosaic and unpromising facts in new and striking lights, so assured of his power to be sublime, that he has no fear of a lapse into the grotesque. We cannot but smile to hear a cloak described as "a warm specific against cold

* Athenæus Deipn. xiii. 17, and many writers in the "Anthology."

winds," * or a pot of oil as "the olive's produce pent in fire-scorched earth;" † but where we see incongruity, Pindar's audience saw sublimity, and there is something heroic in the poet's confidence that so it would be. The same may be said of many another daring phrase in his Odes, as where he speaks of smoke that "kicks" ‡ against the sky, or personifies an apology as "Excuse, the child of Afterthought," § or bids Hiero "forge his tongue on the anvil of truth," ‖ or describes the remembrance of his own ancestry as a "whetstone shrilling at his tongue." ¶ A poet who dares to speak thus, shows a confidence of his power to make language produce a desired effect on his audience which must command admiration, if the result proves that such confidence was well founded. And in the case of Pindar, his contemporary reputation supplies this proof.

Pindar's rapidity is not an unmixed advantage. Often, before his readers have grasped one thought, he hurries them to another and yet another, so that —like travellers whirled in an express train through fine scenery — they receive impressions which are neither clear nor permanent. But sometimes he presents an idea so vividly that it cannot fail to arrest attention; and in such cases, the rapidity with which he produces his effect is a distinct element in our enjoyment of it. Thus, in the Fifth Olympian, in his picture of the new settlement at Camarina, he makes a few brief phrases serve for pages of description, and

* Ol. ix. 97. † Nem. x. 35. ‡ Isthm. ii. 114.
§ Pyth. v. 27. ‖ ib. i. 86. ¶ Ol. vi. 82.

the rapidity with which the details are suggested only makes the impression more distinct. And sometimes the effect of a particular scene is heightened by contrast with the hurry of surrounding passages, as, in the Sixth Olympian, the beautiful details in the picture of the deserted babe Iamus are set off by the rapid hints of the confusion in the palace, the hurried departure of Æpytus for the Delphian oracle, and the scene of triumph and congratulation at his return. Further, in the moral and didactic portions of his Odes, Pindar's power of expressing ideas rapidly appears in the form of a sententious terseness, well calculated to arrest the attention and to impress the imagination of his readers. Thoughts which are fine in themselves appear yet more imposing when embodied in language concise and pregnant as the utterances of an oracle. And even where his thought is trivial, it is often expressed with a felicitous point and brevity that present truisms as epigrams, and fallacies as at worst ingenious paradoxes.

The accounts of particular Odes in our previous chapters will, it is to be hoped, have convinced the reader that mere command of style is not the only merit of our author's poetry. His conception of the character of Jason * is surely at once original and noble, and it is developed through a succession of scenes with a consistency and dexterity which imply no small dramatic talent. Pindar has been charged with exhibiting in his poetry a certain coldness, and want of human tenderness, — not indeed peculiar to

* In the Fourth Pythian Ode : see chap. ix.

him among ancient poets, and to some extent a consequence of the nature of his subjects, but still certain, more or less, to repel a modern reader. Yet the author of 'The Christian Year'—no mean judge, surely, on such a point—in devoting no less than three of his Oxford "Prælectiones" to prove that Pindar's is in the highest sense a genuine poetic nature, dwells with emphasis on the poet's sympathy with human life in its successive phases, his sense of the charm of infancy, the grace of youth, the vigour of manhood, the serenity of age. Nor certainly is Pindar blind to the more pathetic aspects of humanity—its transitoriness, its sorrows, its ignorance, its moral frailty—and he is ever eager to discover a reflection which may console the sufferer.

"What are we, great or lowly? Creatures of a day!
Man's but a phantom dream. Yet in the gracious ray
Poured from on high, his life puts joy and glory on." *

"Hiero, thou know'st — for known to thee is all tradition's lore—
How, for each blessing gods bestow, they add a double share of woe:
Fools may not brook its weight, but wise men find
The threatening cloud is silver-lined." †

"What is gone
(Came it of right, or maugre right) is none,
No! not Time's selt that brought it, can reverse!
Yet all may be forgot in happier hours;
For blessings new destroy the primal curse." ‡

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* Pyth. viii. 94. † ib. iii. 80. ‡ Ol. ii. 15.

He loves to exhibit the compassion and forgiveness of gods for sins of oblivion or heedless rashness.* Filial and family love is elevated above the sphere of physical instinct, and becomes a divine inspiration, which can triumph over the fear of death, and even over death itself.† With a grief too great for consolation, the poet will at least express a sympathy—

> "Ah me! the speechless woe I felt." ‡—(S.)

Yet no doubt the usual tone of these Odes is jubilant rather than pathetic, and occasionally the poet's exultation indulges itself in a sort of grim humour at the expense of a defeated rival, which might expose him to a charge of heartlessness. We do not quite like to think of Pindar's audience laughing over his picture of the baffled competitor, slinking home by back lanes to avoid the jeering of his comrades;§ and prefer the morality which he elsewhere inculcates, the lesson of the Ancient Prophet of the Sea—

> "Who bade mankind full praise bestow
> E'en on the prowess of a noble foe." ‖

A similar tone of sarcasm may perhaps be detected in a passage of the Seventh Isthmian, which tells how Memnon and Hector and many another champion were "*directed to the house* of Persephone,"—*i.e.*, in plain terms, slain—"by Achilles." But we cannot be quite sure how the phrase would strike a Greek audience. The sense of the ludicrous varies from age

* Ol. vii. 45-50, 30, 77.
† Pyth. vi. 30-39; Nem. x. 75-90; Ol. viii. 79, 80.
‡ Isthm. vi. 37. § Pyth. viii. 80-87. ‖ ib. ix. 97.

to age, and one generation is amused where another is impressed.

The profusion of metaphor in Pindar's poetry is remarkable, and his analogies are often happy in the extreme. Sometimes, however, they strike us as strained, and not unfrequently (it must be owned) as commonplace. Some notion of his resources in this respect might be conveyed by a list of the objects to which from time to time he compares his own poetry. Among them are flowers, dew, honey, wine, gold, ivory, coral, palaces, merchandise, winds, paths, sandals, chains, and so forth *ad libitum*. He speaks of himself, in figures drawn from the sports which he describes, as wrestling with his theme, as hurling his dart beyond those of all competitors, as launching his quoit fairly without overstepping the "touch-line." Now he is shooting arrows that strike but never wound, now he is rearing a storehouse filled with costly treasures, now he is outdoing the statuary's art by the creation of images that move and breathe, now he is ploughing the fields of the Muses, now he is preparing medicine for the athlete's hurts or a bath to refresh his weary limbs. Much of all this, no doubt, is trite now, and was not new then. Pindar is fond of asserting his originality, but probably his claim refers rather to the employment of his materials than to the selection of them. Still, if the quality of his metaphors does not always impress us, we cannot but be struck by their mere profusion, and the boldness with which he handles them.

The rapidity of language, which is so marked a

feature in Pindar's poetry, by no means proves a corresponding rapidity in its production. Pindar has sometimes been represented as a sort of *improvisatore*, dashing off his Odes at lightning pace, with much natural and acquired skill, but little or no reflection. Such a view, however, though it has been maintained by competent critics, seems at once unsupported by evidence, and improbable in itself.

It cannot be proved by appealing to the amount of poetry produced by our author, and inferring from this the rapidity of its production. Much as he undoubtedly produced, it may be calculated with some probability that the extant Odes amount to at least a sixth of all his published poetry.* But let us suppose the total mass far greater than this, and allow that, for every poem catalogued by the industrious librarians of Alexandria, another may have existed of which all their research had failed to discover a trace. Still the probable amount will fall far short of that which many Greek authors, and notably the great Athenian dramatists, are estimated to have produced. Yet it has never been suggested that these authors sacrificed finish to rapidity of production. A long life, devoted solely to his art, would have surely afforded to a poet of Pindar's talents ample space for the composition, without undue pressure, of a very large number of Odes and Hymns and Dithyrambs. The mere extent of his poetry, then, proves nothing.

* By "published" is here meant, produced and performed at public or family gatherings.

Again, if we consider the nature of a Choral Ode, and the manner of its production, it is *a priori* improbable that such works could have been composed on the spur of the moment. The mere necessity of writing with a view to the musical and spectacular effects of the composition would demand care and reflection, —unless, indeed, the poem was to be a mere *libretto*, which—as has been pointed out in the first chapter —was certainly not the case.

Or if we examine such occasional evidence as is contained in Pindar's actual Odes, there is little to support the theory of rapid production. The Odes were generally composed for celebrations held long after the victories which they commemorated. Sometimes the poet speaks, in one Ode, of another which he has temporarily laid aside, or which he has begun to plan, but which will not for some time be ready; and we gather, on the whole, that it was his practice to ponder over a theme, and to wait for inspiration, rather than to force it. One Ode *was* apparently produced on very short notice, and Pindar makes a merit of this, which he would hardly have done had it been his practice. Once at least, also, we find him designing and promising a particular Ode; and then, long after, sending the Ode promised with an apology for the delay. True, his apology at first sight bears out the view which is here questioned. "I forgot," he says; and it may doubtless be urged that a poet who spent much previous thought upon his poems would hardly forget in such a case. But it is not impossible that the excuse was a mere poetical artifice,

designed to introduce certain protestations of friendship which are ingeniously attached to it. We can hardly imagine that a patron, whose commission had been really neglected, would be appeased by hearing that the poet had forgotten all about him. And on the whole it seems quite conceivable that the offence and the apology are equally mythical; that the Ode was never expected to follow immediately on its predecessor, but was commissioned for some later celebration of the victory; and that, in short, Pindar's protestations merely come to this,—"How could I leave such a triumph a single day unsung? To think that I should have gone on with my Pæans and my Dithyrambs, and only now be framing an 'Epinicium' for Agesidamus!" *

As to the admitted rapidity of Pindar's style, this seems to be absolutely without bearing on the question. That which reads quickly need not have been quickly written. On the contrary, where many ideas are conveyed in few words, the presumption is that the compression results from additional labour. Abruptness may be studied. A daring phrase may be the last result of a careful deliberation, and be

* With a precisely similar artifice, Shakespeare's Duncan increases the effect of the honours which, at the earliest possible opportunity, he has lavished on Macbeth, by an affectation of shame at not having bestowed them sooner:—

> "O worthiest cousin,
> The sin of my ingratitude even now
> Was heavy on me: thou art so far before,
> That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
> To overtake thee."—*Macbeth*, Act i. sc. 4.

introduced after anxious and repeated weighing of its probable effect. The unexpected desertion of a theme does not prove that the poet's fancy is really wandering free from the restraint of his judgment; it may result from that last refinement of art—the concealment of its presence.

The more we examine the apparent carelessness and freedom of Pindar's fancy, the more the certainty grows upon us that here are not the vagaries of improvisation, but the studied artlessness of a consummate artist. If he quits a topic abruptly, we find, on reflection, that he has not quitted it *prematurely*—not till it has served the purpose of its introduction. If in a chain of argument or narrative he seems to let drop an occasional link, the links in question are just those which the audience can spare; and their omission is sometimes an actual gain in point of vigour and suggestiveness. If he seems to ramble heedlessly into an alien topic, it appears in the end that the supposed digression has led him to the very point at which he has from the first been aiming. There are in most of these Odes passages whose obscurity, or abruptness, or extravagance, or slightness of detail, might well seem the result of haste. But we find on examination that these are no unconscious lapses of a rhapsodist whose tongue outruns his thought. Not only is Pindar aware of the qualities of these passages, but he calls attention to them with an eagerness which is the only trace of *naïveté* displayed by him in the whole matter. He boasts that he is obscure—his poetry is meant to baffle "the general;" that he is abrupt—he cannot waste

time in following "the beaten track." And if at times he makes an apology which is almost a boast for the vagaries of his genius, and protests that he has lost his way among the winding cross-roads of poesy, or has been swept from his theme like a vessel reeling amid the shifting gusts of a storm-wind, these professions of negligence will hardly impose upon a reader who observes that the poet sees his own irregularity, proclaims it, and profits by it—that the traveller is aware of his deviation from the path, and reaches home the sooner—that the vessel sets her sails to catch the side-winds, and is all the earlier in port.

One point, however, Pindar has in common with the Improvisatore. Each starts with, as it were, a ready-made assortment of thoughts, images, phrases, derived from early education in his profession, which supply the crude material of his poetry. Neither, if we may be allowed the figure, creates the threads of which he spins his web. But the Improvisatore cannot even pause to select his materials, or to ponder on their arrangement; he must take them as he can get them, and dispose them in such order as the impression of the moment suggests. This is inevitable when the work is really being produced against time. Pindar, on the contrary, however he may affect to work without a plan, is master of his work from first to last; he exults in this mastery, and exercises it with all his might, grudging no labour and no thought which he can expend on its exercise. He may say, like Shakespeare's Antony, "I only speak right on;" but we can see that it is not so. His selection of his

themes is deliberate; the form which he gives to them is all his own; and its originality is the result of conscious and even anxious self-criticism. Poetry which has been evolved with little thought, whatever the skill or genius of its author, gains little from a microscopic criticism. If its thoughts and its language are beautiful, its structure coherent and complete, these merits will reveal themselves to the full in its first impression upon the reader; and any defect in these points will be made, by a minute analysis, yet more apparent. Precisely the reverse is the case with Pindar's poetry. His finest thoughts and most felicitous phrases will not produce their maximum of possible effect till the reader has studied them in a variety of lights, till he has pondered on their immediate context, their relation to the leading ideas of the poem in which they occur, their appropriateness to particular circumstances of the occasion on which that poem was produced, the special memories and associations which they would suggest to an audience of Sicilians or Æginetans or Thebans. At first sight, again, an Ode of Pindar's exhibits but little trace of that astonishing internal structure which is revealed on a closer scrutiny —elements apparently the most incongruous, woven by mutual interpenetration and by subtle threads of connecting thought into a coherent and indissoluble whole. The more minute our scrutiny becomes, the more elaborate appears the structure which it reveals, and the more incredible do we find it that such a structure could result from hurried and unreflecting labour.

It is wholly impossible, within the limits of the present work, to attempt more than the most brief allusion to the light which the Odes of Pindar throw on the moral and theological ideas of his day. The reader who wishes to pursue this most interesting subject will find, in an admirable treatise by a modern German scholar,* a full and systematic exposition of the poet's Philosophy of Life in all its branches. He will find that it is possible to gather into a remarkably complete and coherent body of doctrine the numerous moral maxims and religious speculations which are scattered through the Pindaric Odes, composed though these were at varying intervals in the course of a long life. In this respect, as in others, Pindar's intellect seems to have reached its full growth prior to the production of his earliest extant poem. As an artist, his conception of his art, and the technical processes by which he produced his effects, were practically the same at every stage of his career — unmodified either by development from within, or by influences from without. As a theologian and a moralist, he seems in like manner to have adopted early, and once for all, a comprehensive and consistent theory, which remained thenceforth the background of his whole religious and ethical teaching.

Space only remains to indicate in a few words a single phase of this philosophy,—the view involved in it of *success within an appropriate sphere* as the true aim and ideal of every noble life.

* Buchholz, Die sittliche Weltanschauung des Pindaros u. Æschylos. Leipzig: 1869

Starting from the principle that deity is the highest and best conceivable state of existence, but a state which is unattainable to frail humanity, Pindar finds the *summum bonum* of man in the nearest practicable approximation to the divine state. Prowess and wisdom he considers as the two qualities which bring man nearest to the gods. Continual progress, then, in one or both of these respects, constitutes the perfection of a human life; and the zeal or ambition which prompts such progress, is a divinely implanted instinct or grace in every worthy human soul.

But this progress must consist, not in the acquisition from without of prowess or of wisdom, but in the development from within of such germs of these qualities—inherited, or at any rate innate—as exist in a man from his birth. To one man the gods who rule our destinies give capacities of prowess, to another capacities of wisdom; and these in different measure, and capable (in each case) of expansion up to a given limit, and no further. Legitimate ambition encourages a man to develop his peculiar gift up to this point; and another spiritual grace, discretion, enables him to recognise the limit, and to curb ambition within it.

In strong contrast with this, the only true progress is the attempt to win an artificial excellence by straining after those gifts of prowess or wisdom, which the gods withhold from the unworthy aspirant. Presumption in such a man takes the place of legitimate ambition, and urges him onward to a point at which infatuation is waiting to hurl him into destruction.

Such is the general outline of the doctrine. We pass to some of its special applications.

Athletic eminence is a special development of those capacities which are included under prowess. Not every man, therefore, may lawfully seek it; but to seek and to achieve it, proves that the seeker has found his true sphere, and is succeeding in it. The competitions at the great games furnish a test which distinguishes the born champion from the presumptuous charlatan. Concrete victories are, as it were, the fruits by which the tree is known. The gods are careful that the prizes shall fall to no unworthy aspirant. A victory, then, at Olympia or the Isthmus, proves that the winner has found his true sphere, and is exercising within it, at the prompting of a noble ambition, gifts of inborn prowess, which are daily bringing him towards the point where his nearest possible approximation to deity will be realised. Further let him not seek to press. "Seek not to become a god!" *

Other and similar capacities of progress are implied in the divine gifts of power and wealth. The culmination of power is kingship; and the ideal king is one whom legitimate ambition carries forward to the attainment of such greatness and magnificence as he may lawfully achieve, and whom, on reaching that point, discretion arrests, and occupies with the consolidation of his power, and the enjoyment of a cultured and dignified leisure. The capacities, again, which the gods give with the gift of wealth, are developed by a generous and public-spirited employment of that

* Ol. v. 56.

wealth; and equestrian victories are among the most conspicuous tokens that such a development is taking place, and that the lord of wealth, with the favour of heaven to back him, is making such approach as his lot allows towards the divine life.

Wholly apart from these, yet equally leading by another road in the direction of divine perfection, is the progress which Pindar considers to be his own especial duty, the development of his own especial gifts. This is the progress in wisdom, which—no more than prowess—can be obtained by unauthorised effort, however charlatans may persuade the foolish herd that they have obtained it. True poetic eminence stands to the gift of wisdom in much the same relation as athletic eminence to that of prowess. Neither is attainable save by special favour of heaven. To win either, a man must possess an inborn gift, must develop it under the influence of legitimate ambition into its due proportions, and must learn from discretion to know his limit and observe it. Convinced that such a gift has been bestowed on himself, Pindar regards his poetry as a sacred trust, which it should be the work of his life to improve by diligent and prudent use. To glorify worth, to condemn evil,—these are to him solemn duties, imposed upon him from his birth; to fail in them would be a disloyalty to the laws of his being. Zealously then, and with many a prayer for divine help, he strives to fulfil his trust. But with all his zeal he recognises a limit at which discretion must arrest him. He dares not

"stain his speech" with boastful falsehood nor with seductive flattery; he dares not exalt human worth in terms which encroach upon the prerogatives of gods. Nor must his denunciations of evil carry him beyond his limit. "I saw the portion of the slanderer Archilochus," he cries—"I saw, and I held aloof!" Such is the ideal of the true poet's life, which Pindar strove to realise. And with it he contrasts the vain struggle of its spurious counterfeit towards successes which it can never achieve, its endeavour to substitute an artificial lore for the true poetic gift, the grossness of its flattery, the malice of its censures, and withal its pitiable failure. When all is done, what are the spurious pretenders, and what is the genuine poet whom they envy and assail? They, the loaded nets, dredging in deep waters;—he, the buoyant cork, unscathed by the brine! They, the paltry crows, chattering in pairs over their absurd pretensions;—he, the glorious eagle, soaring in lonely grandeur above their heads.

In the ancient legends of Greece, of which, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, all choric poetry as a matter of course availed itself, Pindar finds abundant materials for illustrating and enforcing his philosophy of life. The development into a truly noble life of inborn prowess impelled by legitimate ambition is sketched in the story of Pelops. The character of Jason shows us the same qualities, and calls our special attention to the discretion which should accompany them. Observance of the due "limit" is

described as the crowning virtue of the Theban hero Iolaus. The lavish yet discreet employment of wealth and material prosperity is exemplified in Pindar's legend of the early settlers in Rhodes, and in many brief allusions to old-world worthies—Crœsus, Nestor, Sarpedon, Cinyras. The due development of inborn wisdom is traced in the myths of Iamus and Amphiaraus. On the other hand, Pindar finds in many a legend warnings against a misuse of natural gifts, or a presumptuous departure from a natural sphere. Ixion and Tantalus illustrate the ruin which attends a wrong and presumptuous use of prosperity; Asclepius perishes because he has used his gift of wisdom without discretion;—not content to heal the sick, he has raised the dead to life. These instances are but a few out of many. Pindar rarely misses any opportunity which the details of his legends offer, of calling attention to a point of his philosophy. The heroic qualities of his heroes are traced to their "inborn nature," their feats are performed at the bidding of "noble zeal," "high ambition;" if they fail, it is because they have miscalculated their measure, and discretion has not restrained ambition from degenerating into presumption.

The same doctrines are carried by Pindar into the sphere of politics. Holding that greatness is an inborn and inherited gift, he naturally sympathises with hereditary monarchies and aristocracies of birth, and is unwilling to see political power committed to a "greedy host" of plebeians. But he does not consider

any form of government as wholly fatal to the development of political excellence. Even in a democracy inborn worth will assert itself and prosper; and Pindar always urges his aristocratic patrons to assert their superiority over the mob by a display of princely virtues and by lavish munificence and hospitality, never by grasping at political privileges, or appearing in the character of "saviours of society," to disturb the balance of a democratically constituted state. Pindar has little in common with such advocates of extreme oligarchical pretensions as the Megarian poet Theognis. He never exhorts a prince or a noble to regard the populace as a natural enemy, who should be overreached and repressed and ill-treated on principle. On the contrary, he applies his theory of "measure in all things" to teach to monarchs and aristocracies lessons against all undue assertion of their prerogative. An ideal ruling class, as he conceives it, is marked out for power by the possession of a natural influence and authority over inferior natures. Legitimate ambition develops this potential greatness into actuality, and discretion confines such ambition to its proper sphere, and guards against those abuses of power which provoke sedition, and often end in the disasters of a revolution.

But now—for we, too, must observe our "measure" —the time has come to take our leave of Pindar. We have learnt (it is to be hoped) to see in him something more than Voltaire's "poet of the prize-ring." We have formed some idea of the qualities which have

earned him his fame—the dignity of his style, to which Gray alludes so finely:*—

> "The pride and ample pinion
> That the Theban eagle bear,
> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air,"—

its dazzling rapidity and force, sketched no less finely by a modern poetess:†—

> "Bold,
> Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
> The race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
> Slant startled eyes, that seemed to hear
> The chariot rounding the last goal
> To hurtle past it in his soul."

We have recognised in him also the possession of other poetic gifts, with which his critics have not always credited him, and have seen that Pindar is no mere panegyrist, but the exponent of a philosophy of life which he genuinely believed it was his mission to proclaim to his contemporaries. If space permitted, it might be shown that Pindar, in his doctrines of "natural capacity" and "the due measure," anticipated some of the most characteristic and suggestive speculations of later Greek philosophy, and prepared men's minds for such a treatment of moral questions as we find in the 'Republic' of Plato or the 'Ethics' of Aristotle. But it would be hopeless within these limits even to hint at a discussion of these matters. And here we may

* Gray, Ode V., "The Progress of Poesy."
† Mrs E. B. Browning.

close our survey of Pindar's life and works with a last quotation, showing us what the poet desired that his life and works should be, and what was the memory of himself that he would fain bequeath to later ages :—

"Grant me, O Jove ! each crooked path to shun,
Simple and straight my honest race to run !
So may mine be
No name to tinge with shame my children's cheek!
Gold, lands, let others seek ;
I ask an honoured grave,—the good to adorn,
And load the vile with scorn." *—(S.)

* Nem. viii. 35-39.

END OF PINDAR.

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